Strategic Initiatives Summative Evaluation of Ontario jobLink Resource Centres

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Background

The jobLink initiative was established in Ontario in 1994 to provide funding to resource centres (RCs) to improve the access to employment services and support for social assistance recipients (SARs) ultimately leading to self-sufficiency. Funding in 1994-95 for the initial sites was jointly shared by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the federal government under the Strategic Initiatives program of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). In-kind contributions were provided by local municipalities. The jobLink program was terminated in 1995, though resource centres continued to operate at the former jobLink sites.

Research Issues

The purpose of this study was to conduct a process and summative evaluation of integrated resource centre delivery sites, which were initially established through jobLink. Communities that were selected to participate in the evaluation included Toronto, Sudbury, Windsor and Ottawa. This evaluation builds on a process evaluation of the Windsor and Sudbury sites conducted in 1996. The issues, which formed the basis of this evaluation, were:

- ***client impacts***, specifically the labour market and non-labour market outcomes of participation in resource centres;
- ***cost-effectiveness/efficiency*** of resource centres;
- ***partnerships***, including lessons learned on building partnerships;
- ***community impacts*** such as improving access to services, reducing duplication and enhancing community capacity; and
- ***case management***, referring to issues such as client selection, utilization of services and monitoring.

Methodology

There were five major components in the methodological approach for this evaluation:

1. ***Document/literature review.*** Including prior evaluation work and local RC documentation.
2. ***Surveys of RC clients.*** A telephone survey of 493 RC clients was conducted and distributed roughly evenly across the four sites — Toronto, Sudbury, Windsor and Ottawa.

3. ***Survey of non-RC clients.*** In total, 400 telephone interviews were completed with non-RC clients. This comparison group was drawn from the General Welfare Assistance (GWA) caseload, selected to be comparable with RC participants in terms of sex, age and year started receiving social assistance. The comparison group was also screened to ensure that they were receiving social assistance during a period comparable with RC clients. The comparison population group data were weighted to the participant population in terms of age, number of dependants, education and pre-program employment status.

4. ***On-site visit.*** An on-site visit, including key informant interviews, documentation review and a focus group with clients, was conducted at the Ottawa site to provide a more detailed examination of the operation and community environment at this location.

5. ***Administrative data analysis.*** Two sources of administrative data were examined for this evaluation: basic program/RC administrative data and General Welfare Assistance data. Linkages to HRDC data files, particularly the Status Vector and TI files were also established.

A series of caveats should be noted. First, the evaluation findings are representative of the four sites examined, not the jobLink initiative overall. Second, some sites provided sampling frames that included volunteer participants. Third, due to delays in processing the comparison group file, the survey of participants and the survey of the comparison group were conducted several months apart. Finally, despite our attempts to construct a comparable group of non-participants through sample selection, screening and then weighting, there were some remaining differences between the two groups.

Client Profile

jobLink resource centres were initially established to provide services targeted to social assistance recipients. While SARs remain the primary client group for resource centres, many services are open to all community residents who are unemployed and seeking work. The client profile of resource centres depends to some extent on the location of the centre, with off-site centres drawing a broader mix of clientele.

The profile of current jobLink clients presented in the report confirms a need for employment assistance. Clients generally have sporadic experience in the labour market and high reliance on income transfers, leading to poor prospects for obtaining employment for these workers.

Key Findings

Client Impacts

Resource centres appear to have met their objectives in terms of increasing access to services. The utilization of employment services among jobLink clients was high (significantly higher than the comparison group), with almost all clients having accessed self-serve products and two-thirds receiving staff-assisted services. Employment services available largely reflect clients' original expectations and satisfaction ratings for services were generally high. Information about the services available to them and follow-up were rated less positively.

While virtually all clients surveyed could be classified as in the labour force (either employed or interested in obtaining employment and had actively searched for work), the employment rate for the jobLink resource centre clients was relatively low (only one in four were employed full-time). While jobLink participants initially showed more positive labour market outcomes than the comparison group, these differences largely disappeared when the multivariate analysis controlled for pre-existing differences between the two groups. Sociodemographic variables such as sex, age and marital status were more important predictors of employment status. The greater likelihood that the jobLink clients were in the labour market (i.e., actively looking for work) was also an important factor. The multivariate analysis, however, did show a significant and positive advantage for the participant group in terms of number of weeks employed during the post-program period. As well, the jobs that were found by jobLink clients were more likely to be year-round, full-time and higher paying.

The current financial situation of clients and the comparison group is generally poor. Average household incomes are well below the average in Canada and the majority of respondents reported that they had difficulty in living on their current income. Utilization of public support, particularly social assistance, is quite high among both the client and comparison groups. The majority of clients and comparison group respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with their current level of financial security.

Cost-Efficiency/Effectiveness

There is a lack of evidence collected in this evaluation to make a definitive judgement on the cost-efficiency or effectiveness of jobLink resource centres. According to process evaluation information and the data collected in this evaluation, cost of service varies considerably depending of the types of services provided, the way client volumes are calculated and the proportion of clients receiving self-directed *versus* staff-assisted services. The cost per client served for Windsor was $199, for Ottawa $74, and for Sudbury Central the cost was $12. No cost figures were available for the Toronto site. An overall average based on these figures is $95.

Cost-effectiveness of resource centres was also expected to be achieved in the longer term as social assistance recipients are helped in finding jobs and attaining self-sufficiency. Sustainable employment leads to reduced costs for public support such as employment

insurance and social assistance. According to the survey data, the success rate for jobLink clients — measured in terms of the proportion who are currently employed — is 38 %. Based on the efficiency ratios noted above, we could extrapolate to calculate a cost per *employed* client of about $585.

Partnerships

Local municipalities, MCSS and HRDC are key partners in most of the resource centres examined in the evaluation. Roles and responsibilities of government partners include providing funding, day-to-day administration of the resource centre (usually the municipal level) and providing linked services (e.g., HRDC literature and job bank listings are made available to the resource centre, specialized expertise may be provided on a case-by-base basis by other partners). In addition to government partners, most resource centres have sought partnerships with community-based organizations. Less work has been conducted on developing partnerships with industry in terms of leveraging contributions or on developing employment placements/opportunities for clients.

Community Impacts

Key informants generally believed that jobLink resource centres had enhanced services by providing walk-in access to employment services that had not been available before. The evidence from the survey of clients indicates that the resource centre was the primary source of assistance for most clients — only one in five accessed other types of services or assistance that did not involve the resource centre. Marketing, however, is an issue that was raised in several sites with respect to building infrastructure. New resource centres, particularly those that do not operate as a storefront or are located "off-site" — i.e., located in a social assistance office or co-located with an established agency — must build a clientele. This requires promotion and strong links with referral sources.

In terms of integration of services, the collocation of organizations has been only moderately successful. Community-based organizations sometimes resist collocation arrangements out of fear of losing funding. Integration of services is often accomplished through staffing arrangements, which involve staff from partner organizations providing services on-site at the resource centre on a regular basis. Key factors for successful collocation include clear articulation of roles and responsibilities of partners and communication within the office with respect to procedures and goals and objectives.

Key informants agreed that there are significant benefits to service integration for clients. Collocation arrangements allow clients to access a variety of services at one site. This increases the likelihood that clients will utilize the various employment services and also decreases the cost and inconvenience for clients. Collocation can also have benefits for staff in terms of informal training and professional development among the representatives from different agencies.

The elimination of duplication is probably the least clear among the community impacts of resource centres. Resource centres did not conduct a great deal of needs analysis research prior to implementation and so some communities did not have a clear

understanding of gaps in services or extent of duplication. Key informants, however, generally believed that recent reductions in government funding for employment services, as well as funding cuts among Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) meant that gaps in services were more likely to be a problem than duplication.

The sustainability of resource centres in the longer term with the termination in funding, however, is unclear. While the focus of Ontario Works on increasing self-sufficiency would seem to fit with resource centre objectives and activities, funding of activities is an ongoing issue.

Case Management

While the focus of resource centre activities is on social assistance recipients, most centres can and will provide assistance to other groups as well, such as employment insurance recipients and other unemployed individuals (e.g., youth). The resource centres examined in this evaluation provide a wide variety of self-serve and staff-assisted products and services to clients.

Monitoring and tracking of resource centre clients is usually conducted using customized databases or, in some smaller centres, manually. All resource centres have a registration form upon which the client record is based (this may be limited to staff-assisted clients only). Resource centres also collect information on client employment activities, though this is largely limited to staff-assisted services such as participation in workshops, referrals and so on. Use of self-serve products is not rigorously tracked by the resource centres. As well, while resource centres generally produce monthly statistics and quarterly reports on throughput indicators such as service utilization and client volume, there is less emphasis on tracking outcomes related to employability. Some centres conduct periodic surveys of clients to assess satisfaction and need for improvement.

Conclusions

In sum, resource centres provide employment services to clients who are in need of assistance to improve their job prospects. The survey data clearly indicate that the jobLink group had far greater access to employment services and programs than the comparison group. While some of the benefits of resource centres appear quite modest, this must be interpreted in light of the challenging profile of the target client group. The survey results indicate that while the jobLink client group showed a significant employment advantage compared with the comparison group, this was due to pre-existing differences between the two groups. There are, however, positive benefits attributable to the program in terms of length of unemployment and type of employment found in the post-program period.

In terms of the operation of the resource centres themselves, jobLink has led to the development of partnerships, greater integration of services and enhanced community capacity. However, funding issues, difficulties in effectively managing partnerships and efficient monitoring have posed barriers for some centres and led to weaknesses in delivery. As well, the movement away from a case management approach to a more self-

serve model in some centres will have an impact on the centres' ability to assist the full range of their clients' needs. Greater communication, both within offices and with clients, as well as continued community development were identified as key elements for future success.

Recommendations

1. Collocation

The jobLink initiative was intended to involve various levels of government and non-government organizations to provide integrated services to social assistance recipients. While physical collocation was not achieved in many of the sites included in this evaluation, the collocation of organizations is reported to lead to numerous benefits.* Collocation offers many advantages both to organizations (e.g., increased efficiency, staff collaboration and sharing) and to clients (e.g., expanded availability of services, "one-stop" access to programs). The use of various self-serve products and referrals by participants interviewed for this evaluation suggests that clients themselves desire access to the broadest possible services offered by adjacent organizations. Future initiatives that aim at developing the employment resource centre model should give careful consideration to collocated arrangements among governments (federal, provincial, municipal employment services) and community partners. The collocation may involve varying levels of integration from itinerant collocation of staff to greater integration and sharing of resources and management/administration.

2. Service Provision

The evidence gathered in this evaluation suggests that jobLink participants were very satisfied with the self-directed and staff-assisted services they received. While the move to greater self-directed services was viewed as positive and provides expanded access to employment support services, it should also be noted that many participants did not appear to be adequately equipped to make use of some of these services on their own. For participants, the most significant gap in programming was information on the types of services that were available at the resource centre and initial orientation/support on how to best make use of the services. The case management approach, whether conducted by the resource centre itself or a third party organization, should consider a process for assessing clients' needs/skills prior to referral to an employment resource centre. As well, future efforts in providing self-directed services to unemployed clients should include orientation sessions and access to staff support in the employment resource centre itself. This implies a need for a highly trained staff who are familiar with the resources available, highly computer literate and have strong case management/counselling skills.

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* See, for example, KPMG Project Report, CASC Process Review — Moving Towards an Integrated Service Delivery System, Edmonton, Alberta, 1997.

3. Local Advisory Committees

Several of the sites that were included in this jobLink evaluation had difficulty in establishing local or community advisory committees. However, in areas where local advisory committees were functioning, the committees proved to be very important in the success of the site by broadening ownership of the initiative and pooling expertise. Committees, composed of community representatives, are also important in examining areas of service needs and duplication to create a more seamless infrastructure. Finally, involvement of community partners ensures that clients receive appropriate referrals when necessary. In future initiatives, the importance of and capacity necessary for establishing successful partnerships should be explicitly recognized. This includes for example, recognition of the human resources necessary to maintain partnerships, development of the particular skill sets (e.g., negotiation) and early involvement of the appropriate partners in the community.

4. Role of Industry

The role of industry was quite limited in all of the sites included in this evaluation. Yet, involvement of local business would present opportunities for leveraging of contributions and development of employment opportunities for clients. Dedicated positions for job developers were not consistent across the sites. It might be useful to harmonize the job development efforts of resource centres with those of other organizations that are also approaching employers to establish links for future client employment (e.g., local schools and colleges looking for co-op placements).

5. Data Collection

As indicated in the description of the methodological approach for this evaluation, the conduct of this study was hampered to some extent by lack of access and availability of program and participant-level data. The formative evaluation of jobLink noted that there were significant vagaries in the data collected by various jobLink sites (e.g., caseloads, financial information). This presents barriers in examining outcome measures across sites (e.g., cost per client served). Follow-up procedures should also receive increased attention in the planning of employment services and sufficient resources allocated to this activity. Finally, the current evaluation encountered difficulties in assembling a satisfactory sampling frame for the survey of jobLink participants due to confidentiality concerns on the part of the sites. In future initiatives of this nature, it would be useful to secure permission for release of information from clients at the time of the intervention to permit evaluation research in the future.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The jobLink initiative was established in Ontario in 1994. The initiative provided funding to resource centres (RCs) in local communities in Ontario to improve the access to employment services and support for social assistance recipients (SARs) which would ultimately lead to self-sufficiency. Funding in 1994-95 for the initial sites was jointly shared by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the federal government under a Co-operation Agreement signed between the two parties in early 1995.[1] In-kind contributions were also provided by local municipalities where the resource centres were located.

Federal funding was provided under the Strategic Initiatives program of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). This program, which provides funding on a cost-shared basis with provinces and territories, was designed to test innovative approaches to addressing high priority areas of employment, learning education and income security. In total, $800 million has been allocated over fiscal years 1995/96 and 1999/2000 to:

- test innovative and cost-effective ways of reforming our social security programs;
- experiment with imaginative ways of addressing areas such as employment, training, income support and services;
- help people develop the skills they need to find, keep and create jobs;
- better serve those Canadians unable to support themselves through employment; and
- provide opportunities for program coherence and integration to reduce the jurisdictional and structural barriers between labour market/training/education and social services.

While the jobLink initiative established guidelines for planning and implementation of the RCs, the termination of the program in 1995 removed any centralized co-ordination in the development of the RCs. Operations and programming, therefore, were developed to reflect local priorities.

The purpose of this study was to conduct a process and summative evaluation of jobLink resource centres at selected communities in Ontario. These communities were Toronto, Sudbury, Windsor and Ottawa. The evaluation was built upon a process evaluation undertaken of Windsor and Sudbury in 1996. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

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1 *Canada/Ontario Co-operation Agreement Concerning jobLink Ontario.*

- assess the impact of the program on worker client's employment, employability and access;
- assess jobLink RC's role in building community consensus and capacity;
- identify jobLink RC's role in improving service co-ordination, filling gaps and reducing overlap in delivery of government services;
- assess cost-effectiveness/efficiency of jobLink RC's services; and
- identify issues critical for future discussions of collocation and co-ordination of federal and provincial service delivery.

The purpose of this Final Report is to present the results of the evaluation. Each of the evaluation issues above are addressed in the following chapters based on the evidence available.

1.2 JobLink Ontario[2]

The goal of jobLink Ontario, as indicated in *Local Implementation Planning*, was to involve various levels of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working together to provide social assistance recipients with a single integrated system of services that would assist them in entering the labour market. Such services included, for example, education and training opportunities, information on the local labour market and job opportunities and support for self-employment. jobLink was established to provide to social assistance recipients greater access to labour market services at the local level.

jobLink resource centres were one vehicle for achieving the objectives of the jobLink Ontario program.[3] Resource centres were set up in local communities to provide social assistance recipients (SARs) with information regarding employment, training and local supports available to them.[4] In co-ordinating the programs and services delivered by the federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as community organizations, the resource centres were a single access point for SARs.

Services could be accessed directly by the individual or with assistance from staff. The services provided to participants included individual employability assessments and employment planning, education and training programs, access to computers and computer-based information, supports (e.g., child care, counselling), resource inventories and self-help tools. In providing these services, resource centres were expected to build on and co-ordinate with existing programs and services, but not to duplicate them.

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2 See Appendix A for a more complete description of jobLink Ontario.

3 Six other components include: Making the Transition from the Existing System; Ontario Training and Adjustment Board programs and services; jobLink Ontario Innovations Fund; employer-based training programs; jobLink Ontario for First Nations and Aboriginal peoples; and HRDC programs and services.

4 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, jobLink Ontario: *Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

To encourage community collaboration in the development of innovative approaches to service delivery and to ensure consumers were more involved in the planning, implementing and monitoring of the jobLink service system, RCs were encouraged to establish Community Advisory Committees. Comprised of service providers, consumers and other key stakeholders or community partners, the key areas of responsibility of the committees would be community information/ consultation/linkages; service planning, monitoring and evaluation; and advice/ recommendations on program design and policy development.

Initial sites for the resource centres were identified through a local jobLink Ontario planning process. Through this community process, a plan for implementing a local jobLink system was to be developed and then submitted to a central approval process. Of importance to this community planning process was the involvement of consumers, program/service providers, planning groups, educators/trainers, private sector employers and organized labour.

In the proposals developed by the communities, a number of key areas had to be addressed: the planning process; existing conditions, including a profile of the community, labour market and the consumer, and the identification of existing services and gaps; suggested improvements to existing services; and an implementation and monitoring plan for providing services, programs and supports that would meet the objectives of jobLink Ontario.[5] The initial sites for the resource centres included: Metropolitan Toronto; City of Windsor; City of Cornwall; City of Kingston and Kingston Township; Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton; Regional Municipality of Waterloo; Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth; Bruce County; Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin; City of Sault Ste. Marie and District of Algoma. Start-up of the resource centres in these sites was scheduled for January 1995.[6]

With the change in government in June 1995, jobLink Ontario was terminated. While this caused some initial uncertainty regarding the future of the resource centres, the RCs continued to function. MCSS has continued to provide direct funding to RCs, with community-level support also provided by Human Resource Centres of Canada (HRCCs). Resource centres have also faced a transition period with the introduction of Ontario Works in 1996 — legislation to replace General Welfare Assistance and the *Family Benefits Act*.

1.3 Study Issues

The primary purpose of this evaluation study was to measure the impacts and effects of the integrated resource centre delivery sites, which were initially established through jobLink. The evaluation also incorporates process elements, however, to examine the

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5 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

6 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

operation of these RCs. The issues, which form the basis of this evaluation, are: ***client impact; cost effectiveness/efficiency; building partnerships; community impact; and case management***. Each of these is discussed, in turn, below.

Under the issue of ***client impact***, questions concerning employment and employability of worker clients (e.g., how long did it take clients to find employment, what were the characteristics of employment, what are the results for staff versus self-assisted services) and the incremental impact/value added (e.g., were there incremental improvements for RC clients compared with non-clients, did RC counselling have a demonstrated impact on clients) are addressed. In addition to employability or labour market outcomes, a series of non-labour market outcomes are measured. Client/community/agency satisfaction (e.g., what was the worker client's overall opinion of RC service, did the RC meet community expectations, how did agencies rank their working relationships with the RC) with the services provided by the RC are also addressed under the issue of client impact.

The second issue, ***cost-effectiveness/efficiency***, refers to essentially operational issues. The variations in delivery provide an excellent opportunity to determine the relative efficiency of different types of services and methods of delivery, though this is dependent on the type of tracking that is available. Client services and client service ratios (e.g., what is the average cost per participant) are addressed to the extent possible.

In terms of the community partnership model, the evaluation of RCs provides information on lessons learned on ***building partnerships*** with community agencies. Questions addressed under the third issue, building partnerships, concern: facilitating partnerships, what worked (e.g., did advisory committees aid the partnership process); inter-agency relationships (e.g., were partners and RC on-site staff able to support and work effectively); and intra-RC relations, member agencies, staff (e.g., what mechanisms contribute to building a team approach within the RC).

The fourth issue that is addressed is ***community impact***. The original objectives of the jobLink initiative focused on, among other things, improvement in access to employment services through a "one-stop shopping" approach. In addressing the issue of community impact, questions concerning the identification of gaps (e.g., to what degree has the RC succeeded in integrating, enhancing and closing gaps in existing services), building community capacity (e.g., to what degree has the RC added to the community's service capacity), reduction in duplication (e.g., to what degree has the RC reduced duplication in services offered), referrals (e.g., what are the links to other community agencies) and development of technology infrastructure (e.g., how has the RC contributed to the technology infrastructure for service delivery in the community) are examined.

The final issue to be addressed under Phase 2 is ***case management***. The questions examined under this issue concern: information capturing systems/ procedures (e.g., how effective are the RC client tracking and information collection systems in terms of tracking agency referrals); mix: self versus staff service (e.g., what is the monitoring accorded self-serve clients); client profile and client selection (e.g., what is the RC's client profile of case managed clients, does the RC apply client selection criteria); and referral agency links.

1.4 Lines of Evidence

There are five major components in the methodological approach for this evaluation:[7]

1. ***Document/literature review***. The purpose of the document/literature review was to place the development of the RCs within the policy context of federal and provincial partners, including the potential impact of new policies on RCs (e.g., Ontario Works). Prior evaluation work and local RC documentation were also reviewed. The document review contributed to addressing some of the evaluation issues, including understanding RC administrative and partnership arrangements.

2. ***Surveys of RC clients***. In total, 493 telephone interviews were completed with RC clients distributed roughly evenly across the four sites — Toronto, Sudbury, Windsor and Ottawa. The objectives of this survey address both process and summative evaluation issues. For example, the survey provides an indication of clients' utilization of services, levels of satisfaction with services received, as well as their views of any alternative services that were available to them. Summative issues related to clients' labour market and non-labour market outcomes are also examined. The client survey data have been weighted by age, sex and year started social assistance to reflect the client population (as represented by the sampling frames that were received from the resource centres).

3. ***Survey of non-RC clients***. In total, 400 telephone interviews were completed with non-RC clients. This comparison group was drawn from the General Welfare Assistance caseload, selected to be comparable with RC participants in terms of sex, age and year started receiving social assistance. The comparison group was also screened to ensure that they were receiving social assistance during a period comparable with RC clients. The comparison group data were weighted to be more comparable with the participants in terms of age, number of dependants, education and pre-program employment status.

4. ***On-site visit***. An on-site visit was conducted with the Ottawa site to provide a more detailed examination of the operation and community environment at this location. Key informant interviews and a focus group with clients constituted the principal methods used to gather the on-site data. As well, the site visit included direct observation of the operation of the RC and the collection and review of RC and local regional economic documentation. A limited number of key informant interviews were also conducted with representatives of the Windsor and Sudbury RCs to update information collected during an earlier formative evaluation.

5. ***Administrative data analysis***. Two sources of administrative data were examined for this evaluation: basic program/RC administrative data and General Welfare Assistance data. Linkages to HRDC data files, particularly the Status Vector files, were also established.

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7 For a more detailed discussion of the methodology for this evaluation, please see *Phase 2 Evaluation of jobLink Resource Centres Field Report*, submitted to Human Resources Development Canada, December 1997.

Exhibit 1.1 summarizes the data collection activities across each of the sites.

EXHIBIT 1.1
Summary of Data Collection Activities

Site	Formative Evaluation Data	On-Site Visit	RC Profile	Key Informants Interviews	Focus Group (participants)	Survey of Participants	Survey of Non-Participants
Toronto	4					4 (n=140)	4
Ottawa		4	4	4 (n=10)	4	4 (n=117)	4
Sudbury	4			4 (n=3)		4 (n=121)	4
Windsor	4			4 (n=2)		4 (n=115)	4

1.5 Caveats

Four important caveats should be noted in the interpretation of study findings. First, this evaluation includes only four of at least 10 initial jobLink resource centres and cannot, therefore, be considered to be representative of the jobLink program overall, but rather reflects the situation in the sites selected. Second, because of confidentiality concerns at some sites, RCs were not able to release their program files, which limited the data quality analysis and subsequent examinations of program activities and impacts. Third, due to delays in processing the comparison group file, the survey of participants and the survey of the comparison group were conducted several months apart. Though the comparison group responded to the survey items in the same timeframe as participants, there was a greater potential for recall bias. The similar timeframe for the studies of the participant and comparison groups, however, does remove any possible effects of changes in the economic cycle. Finally, despite our attempts to construct a comparable group of non-participants through sample selection screening and then weighting, there were some remaining differences between the two groups. These differences were controlled in the data analysis through the use of multivariate analysis techniques. Finally, due to rounding, figures presented in tables and charts may not add to 100%.

1.6 Document Organization

This report contains five additional chapters. Chapter 2. of this report provides a brief operational description of the four jobLink sites covered in the evaluation. Chapter 3. presents a profile of jobLink participants. Chapter 4. describes the types of adjustment and employment services used by jobLink participants and their rated satisfaction with the resource centres. Chapter 5. analyses the labour market and non-labour market outcomes of participants compared with non-participants. Summary and conclusions are presented in Chapter 6.

2. *Resource Centre Sites*

As mentioned above, four resource centre sites were included in this evaluation: Sudbury, Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa. The Sudbury and Windsor sites had been the subject of a formative evaluation of jobLink in 1996 and several key informant interviews were conducted with RC representatives in this study to briefly update the information. Toronto, including two resource centres, had been evaluated in 1997. The Ottawa RC was studied in greater detail for this evaluation through an on-site visit and a series of key informant interviews.

Based on the various sources of information available, a summary of each jobLink resource centre included in the evaluation is presented below. First, a description is provided of the two sites that were the subject of an earlier formative evaluation of jobLink, Sudbury and Windsor. Second, a summary of the Toronto West and Rexdale resource centres is provided, including results from their local evaluation. Finally, the findings for the site visit to the Ottawa Resource Centre are presented.

2.1 Sudbury Central and Windsor Resource Centres Overview

A. Sudbury Central

Organization

jobLink resource centres were established in five locations in the Sudbury area: Sudbury Central, Sudbury East, Sudbury West, Chapleau, and Manitoulin Island. The focus of this summary is the Sudbury Central Resource Centre. As in the other resource centres in this area, MCSS was an operating partner of the Sudbury Central Resource Centre, providing funding for the RC as well as assuming responsibility for the day-to-day operations. The local Human Resource Centre of Canada (HRCC) was the other funding partner for the centre. Sudbury central did not form a local advisory committee during the implementation of the resource centre. There were 18 full-time employees that reported to the centre's manager. The centre's caseload was between 4,000 and 7,000 clients each quarter.

Services and Activities

In addition to the regular income support services provided for social assistance recipients (SARs), Sudbury Central offered counselling services and workshops to clients on topics such as job search skills. The self-serve facilities included access to:

- job banks;
- labour market information;
- computers with résumé writing and personal assessment software, and printers;

- photocopiers;
- documentation; and
- telephones and fax machines.

Partnerships

Of all the resource centres in the area, Sudbury Central was the largest and included staff/partners from HRDC, Youth Employment Services (YES), the YMCA, the Sudbury Vocational Resource Centre, the regional municipality Employment Support Services Unit and People United for Self-Help (PUSH). The distribution of responsibilities was based on the areas of expertise of each partner (e.g., youth, persons with disabilities). For example, the HRDC partner was mostly responsible for providing information on HRDC's training services and general employment insurance (EI) information (the HRCC provided EI services related to applications in another location). Proposals from sponsors/co-ordinators were assessed once a year during the annual budget planning process. External partners included the school boards and the MCSS Family Benefits Assistance (FBA).

Case Management

All clients of the resource centre participated in an application and needs assessment process prior to referral to the centre's programs and activities. Aside from the job banks, services are largely restricted to social assistance recipients. Client information is maintained based on the initial application, as well as on referrals and staff-assisted interventions. All tracking is conducted electronically.

B. Windsor

Organization

The Windsor Resource Centre has three main partners: MCSS, HRDC and the City of Windsor. While none of the partners are co-located within the centre, the Employment Services unit of the City of Windsor is located within the same building, as is the HRCC. MCSS and HRDC provide the Windsor Resource Centre with core funding. MCSS also provides access to their programming, including services for welfare recipients. HRDC's primary role as an operating partner is to provide funding for the centre, but it also provides LAN administration, technical support and equipment. It is the responsibility of the City of Windsor to manage the day-to-day operations of the centre, which it does with minimal input from the other two partners. A local advisory committee, which was planned to provide guidance to the resource centre, was not established. Approximately 1,500 clients are served each quarter.

Services and Activities

The HRCC services within the centre include a complete line of services for EI recipients and job bank kiosks. In addition to offering basic services (e.g., employment counselling), the resource centre provides clients access to four job banks with Labour Market

Information (LMI). The partners have succeeded in pooling their resources to offer many services including:

- résumé writing facilities;
- access to fax and photocopy machines;
- referrals to other sources of services within the community (e.g. child care);
- information for seniors;
- training facilities;
- Internet access; and
- counselling services.

Partnerships

The centre has developed partnerships with many organizations including a community college (St. Clair College), the Youth Employment Centre, the Unemployed Help Centre, the Windsor Board of Education, the Salvation Army and job clubs. The Youth Employment Centre and St. Clair College each provide counsellors on-site; the Unemployed Help Centre provides vocational counselling off-site as well as in-depth assessment services on-site. The HRCC itself has established partnerships with the community colleges for training activities, which are advertised at the centre. These partnerships, however, are expected to change with the devolution of responsibility for training delivery to the provinces under the impending Labour Market Development Agreement.

Case Management

Programs and services at the Windsor Resource Centre are targeted primarily to SAR clients, though non-SAR clients can have access to some services. Clients generally complete a self-assessment questionnaire prior to meeting with an employment counsellor. An opportunity plan, developed by the RC counsellor and client, provides a strategy for the client to return to work. Service delivery is tracked for those who receive staff-assisted services, and the centre uses a satisfaction questionnaire to track results on a yearly basis. There is no specific tracking mechanisms for the self-service facilities.

C. Windsor and Sudbury Formative Evaluation Feedback[8]

Implementation

In Windsor, the organizational structure and physical layout of the resource centre has been satisfactory according to key informants. Partners on site can share information and services and clients have access to many services within the same building. While a sense of rivalry among partners and staff was evident initially (largely due to perceived threats to job security), this feeling has faded with time.

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8 For more information on this evaluation, refer to Human Resources Development Canada. *Final Report on the Process Evaluation of the Windsor and Sudbury Resource Centres*, September 1996.

In Sudbury, the formative evaluation results indicated some confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Accordingly, some respondents said that jobLink was not entirely successful in its attempt to reduce duplication in services. The reporting lines were also confusing for some of the staff/partners. Respondents from both Sudbury and Windsor concluded that there must be a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities as well as the overall goal of the centre for it to be effective. The formative evaluation results indicated the importance of prior planning and needs assessment in ensuring that resource centres are a success.

Other issues, which were identified in the formative evaluation, pertained to the need to pay attention to the ongoing training needs of staff. In addition, the report noted the absence of consistent client information collected and maintained across sites.

Partnerships

Both sites involved multiple partners in the resource centre (partners are still active in the Windsor centre). Respondents from Windsor felt that there was little overlap between the partners on-site and that the working relationships between agencies were generally good. The private sector is not involved, however, on an on-going basis but the resource centre hopes to increase its involvement in the future, especially for training.

In Sudbury Central, the partnerships were sometimes difficult to manage; according to respondents, some partners came into the centre with a narrow agenda and high expectations and were disappointed with the experience because the centre did not meet their clientele's needs. Other respondents noted that the centre initially lacked direction, management did not consult partners adequately, and that co-ordination was poor. These factors improved over time.

The formative evaluation stressed the importance of partnerships in terms of increasing community ownership and ensuring that areas of duplication/gaps are properly addressed. Effective communication among partners and co-ordination among co-located agencies were identified as key ingredients of success.

Impacts and Effects

The objective of the Windsor and Sudbury resource centres was to provide co-ordinated employment services to social assistance recipients and other unemployed individuals. In Windsor, it was felt that this objective was achieved due primarily to the collocation arrangement. Clients have greater access to services through "one-stop shopping," and as a result often receive more specialized or appropriate employment services. The community overall recognizes this, according to some, and greater trust has been developed between the community and the partners since the resource centre was established.

The resource centres are also perceived to have been better able to respond to the needs of various client groups. The specialized expertise of community partners provides more sensitive and responsive services to client groups. Some gaps remain, however, such as for "English as a second language" clients and persons with disabilities.

Impacts and effects of the jobLink resource centre were also reported as positive in the Sudbury Central office. Sudbury Central clients were generally perceived to be satisfied with the centre's services. Most feedback, however, indicated that the centre only met part of its objectives. The marketing strategy was viewed as weak and the roles and responsibilities of each partner were not well understood. While there is no regular survey of clients conducted in Sudbury, respondents felt that the jobLink centre was successful in increasing the employability of many of its clients by raising their self-confidence, interviewing skills and knowledge of job opportunities.

2.2 Toronto West and Rexdale Resource Centres Overview[9]

A. Toronto West

The Toronto West Resource Centre serves clients in the area between Bathurst Street and Royal York Road on the east and west, and Lakeshore Boulevard to the south and St. Clair Avenue to the north. This geographic area initially corresponded to the service catchment areas of the Dovercourt and Dundas Street West GWA offices. In the beginning, the structure of the centre was an administrative linkage between the two separate GWA offices (i.e., Dovercourt and Dundas Street West); the Dovercourt office has since closed.

The centre offers consultation services, workshops, and provides self-service facilities including:

- job banks;
- labour market information;
- a programs and services database;
- computers (for writing résumés, flyers and for accessing the Internet);
- fax machine and telephones;
- photocopiers; and
- program documentation and newspapers.

Most of the clients of the resource centre are welfare recipients with a small but growing population from FBA, EI and other unemployed individuals. The centre is staffed from local through provincial governments. The day-to-day management falls under the jurisdiction of Metro Toronto. HRDC has never been actively present at the site, but provides information and contributes to the job banks of the centre. The centre uses posters, flyers, brochures and contacts with local community agencies to advertise its services.

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9 This section is based on *Resource Centre Evaluation for Toronto West and Rexdale*, February 1997 (evaluation conducted by Traurig and Sparks Inc.). Although the resource centres still exist, some information presented here reflects only the situation as it was in February 1997.

B. Rexdale

The Rexdale Resource Centre provides a full range of self-directed resources and services offered by staff from municipal, provincial and federal governments who work in a co-located environment. Humber College is also represented at the site. Municipal officials are responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre. Although it was not planned that way, community partnerships have been established to look at community development. The clients of the resource centre include social assistance clients, EI recipients and other unemployed individuals.

As in Toronto West, the staff provides a full-range of services including counselling and workshops, but also more extensive employment counselling. Self-service facilities include:

- job bank kiosks;
- labour market information;
- computers for résumé writing;
- fax machines and telephones; and
- program documentation and newspapers.

The centre uses flyers, newsletters, group visits and team meetings to advertise its services. There have also been links established with community agencies in the Rexdale area.

C. Toronto West and Rexdale Formative Evaluations Feedback

The results of an evaluation[10] of the Toronto West and Rexdale resource centres concluded that the centres addressed a gap in employment services available to social assistance recipients and other unemployed individuals. Both clients and staff were satisfied with the resource centre model, reporting that the programs and services were useful in terms of building hard skills, as well as having softer impacts such as increased self-confidence. Two related areas were identified where the resource centres could be improved: development of the demand-side of the labour market by improving clients' access to job opportunities and increasing the accessibility of labour market information; and community development and partnership with organizations to enhance linkages and promote job development. The evaluation also examined the issue of on-site (i.e., located in a social assistance office or co-located with an established agency) versus off-site resource centres, concluding that each model had strengths and weaknesses, though site location was an important determinant of the client target group — off-site centres were more likely to attract a broader range of clientele.

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10 Ibid.

2.3 Ottawa Resource Centre Overview[11]

Organization

The focus of this evaluation study was on one of three resource centres located in the Ottawa area. The RC, located in the west end of Ottawa in a suburban shopping mall, was opened in 1995/96. A Community Planning and Review Committee established the original goals and objectives of the resource centre. However, the Director of Employment Programs at the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton is responsible for the centre and the RC manager administers the day-to-day operations. The resource centre has eight full-time counsellors, one full-time job developer, one part-time technical support staff and three full-time administrative staff. The centre is premised on a team approach. All resource centre staff report directly to the RC manager. In 1996, there were 2,713 new clients and 12,517 visits to the centre.

Services and Activities

Although the RC was designed to focus primarily on self-assisted services, short term, one-on-one counselling is available. Group counselling is also provided in the form of workshops, which cover various topics such as job search, interview techniques and résumé preparation. Basic computer training, addressing the fundamentals of word processing, is provided on an on-going basis (i.e., weekly) in order to raise clients' skills to a functional level. Staff-assisted services typically include employment counselling, assessments and referrals (e.g., referrals within the jobLink RC as well as to other agencies such as the Women's Career Counselling). Maintaining partnerships and contacts with other organizations is also important, particularly with respect to referring clients with needs beyond the mandate of the jobLink RC.

Employment counsellors are required to spend a portion of their time "on call." There are typically two counsellors situated out in the resource area at all times, available to answer any type of question to clients using the self-assisted services (e.g., providing help with the computers, providing advice on a cover letter or résumé). A small childcare area, monitored by staff periodically, is also available for clients with children.

The self-assisted services include the following:

- HRDC job bank kiosks;
- a job board;
- local newspapers;
- Internet access;
- telephone privileges for local calls;
- directories;
- facsimile/photocopy/printing services;
- access to computers and word processing software; and
- information regarding community organizations and programs.

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[11] For a more detailed description of the Ottawa site, please refer to Appendix B

Partnerships

Partnership has been a key ingredient of the Ottawa jobLink resource centres. Partnerships have been developed on several levels to meet a variety of needs. The establishment of the Community Planning and Review Committee represents a partnership of the diverse players within the Ottawa-Carleton community and has served to raise the profile of the jobLink resource centres, ease the co-ordination of services and improve the flow of information among service providers. The RCs have also gained a better appreciation of the mandates and activities of the various community organizations. The partnerships forged by the liaison workers with community-based organizations have served a similar function with respect to raising the profile of the RC and improving the flow of information.

By fall 1998, the resource centre's collocated arrangement with the local HRCC will be operational. This partnership will bring together the services and resources of the HRCC and the resource centre to serve the general public (including EI clients and SARs) in need of employment supports. Further, service access in the RC has been maintained during implementation of Ontario Works.

Case Management

Under jobLink, service delivery moved away from a one-on-one case management approach to a more self-assisted delivery approach. This has meant that employment counsellors do not maintain an on-going relationship with a single client, rather several counsellors may see the same client. If a client has no need of individual counselling or does not require help with any of the self-assisted resources, employment counsellors may have no contact at all, beyond an initial orientation meeting, with a particular client. The only criterion employed to screen clients is that they be receiving social assistance. Clients are generally referred to the RC by their caseworker or from other community organizations. While information was available regarding client participation in workshops and individual counselling, there was initially no tracking of the use of self-assisted services and little evaluation of outcomes beyond anecdotal evidence. Opportunities for clients to provide feedback include assessment forms provided following the workshops and resource centre evaluation forms that may be submitted anonymously. With the introduction of Ontario Works, however, an electronic scanner system has been developed to track client activities as they use the resource centre.

3. jobLink Participant Profile

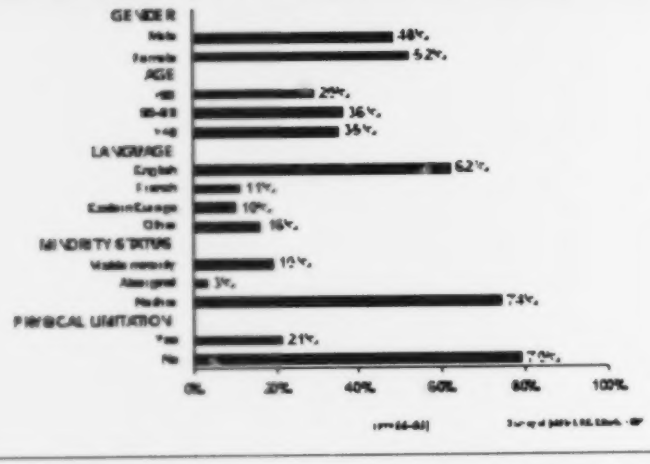
Before a detailed examination of the adjustment and employment activities and program outcomes is undertaken, it is useful to examine the sociodemographic characteristics and prior labour market experiences of jobLink resource centre clients. This chapter is split into two main sections including sociodemographic profile and prior labour market history. Where significant differences exist for sub-groups (at the 99% confidence level), they have been noted in the text.

3.1 Sociodemographic Profile

A. Personal Characteristics

Among RC clients, women were slightly over-represented compared with men (52% to 48%). The average age of surveyed clients is 37 years. The majority of jobLink clients learned English as their first language (62%). Almost equal proportions reported French or an Eastern European language as their mother tongue (11% and 10% respectively). Reflecting the demographic profile of their regions, respondents from Sudbury had a higher proportion of respondents reporting French as their first language and allophones were over-represented in Toronto. These and other findings in this section are presented in Exhibit 3.1.

EXHIBIT 3.1
Personal Characteristics



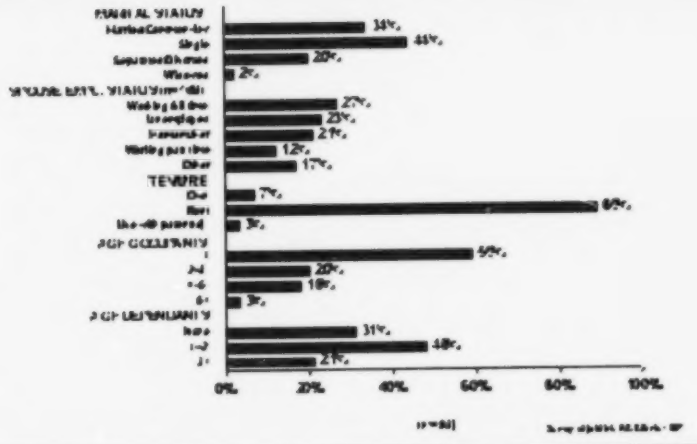
The majority of clients do not consider themselves to be a member of a visible minority or an Aboriginal person; 19% responded that they are a member of a visible minority group and 3% said they are an Aboriginal person. Toronto clients were more likely than other project area respondents to be members of a visible minority group and respondents

from Sudbury were more likely to report not belonging to either group (visible minority or aboriginal). More than three-quarters (79%) of respondents are not limited in the kind or amount of activity that they can do at work.

B. Marital Status and Current Household Characteristics

More respondents reported being single than married or common-law (44 versus 34%). Exhibit 3.2 presents the findings for this section. For those respondents who reported being married or common-law, the employment status for their spouse was split fairly evenly along three possibilities: working full time (27%); unemployed/ looking for work (23%); and homemaker (21%). Respondents in Sudbury were more likely than respondents from other project areas to report having a spouse working full-time. Not surprisingly, women were more likely to report having a spouse working full time, but less likely than men to report their spouse employment status as homemaker.

EXHIBIT 3.2
Marital Status and Current Household Characteristics

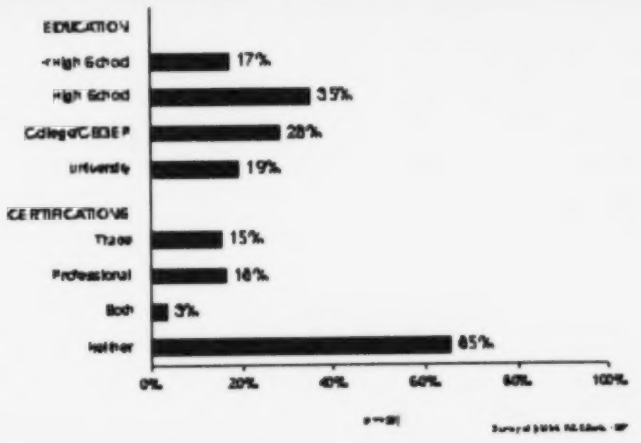


Quite a large proportion of respondents rent their current dwelling (89%). This number is slightly lower for older clients. Forty-one percent of clients report living in a household with more than one occupant. One in five live in a home with two to three occupants. Those who reported living in a home with two or more people were then asked how many members of the household are dependants. Almost half of participants (48%) reported having one to two dependants but one-third (31%) have no dependants. Women are more likely than men to report having one to two dependants and men are more likely to report having no dependants. Similarly, younger respondents are more likely to report no dependants and respondents aged 31 to 45 years are more likely to have at least one dependant.

C. Education

The most common level of education reported by respondents is high school graduate (35%) followed by community college graduate (28%), university post-secondary education (19%), and less than high school (17%). Exhibit 3.3 presents these findings. Most respondents do not have any trade or professional certifications (65%). For those who do, older respondents (46 years or more) are more likely than other age group to hold a professional certificate.

EXHIBIT 3.3
Education



3.2 Prior Labour Market History

Half of the respondents (48%) reported having a full-time job before using the jobLink resource centre. The remaining respondents were fairly evenly split in terms of whether they held a part-time job (19%), no job (17%), or a mix of full and part-time jobs (16%). Respondents from Ottawa were less likely than those from other centres to report never having a job prior, whereas respondents from Toronto were more likely than others to have never had a job before.

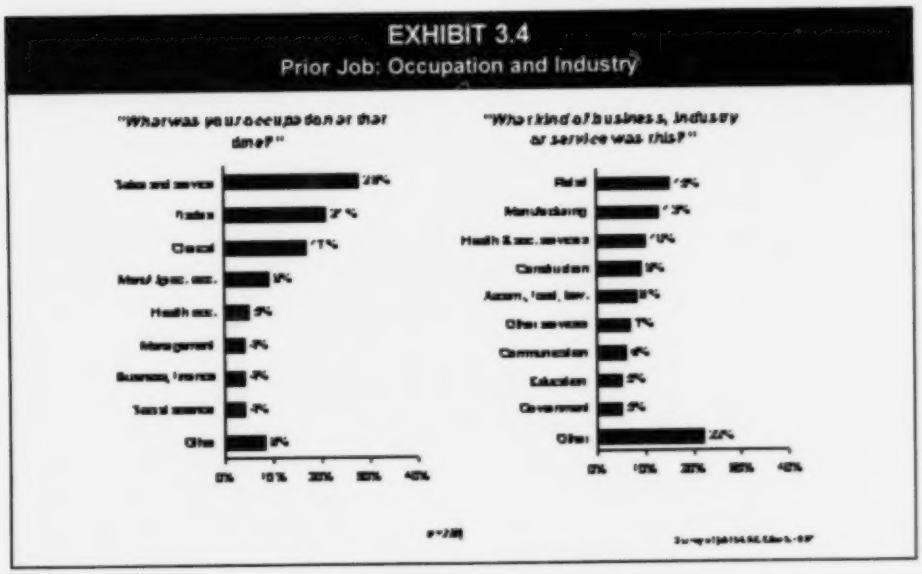
Of respondents who had held some kind of job before using the resource centre, more than half (60%) had worked within the previous two years. For those who reported having a job in the two years before they used the centre, about half reported having only one employer during this time. The average number of employers during this time was 1.9.

A. Characteristics of the Job

Respondents were asked to think about the job (or their most important job if they had more than one) they had in the two years prior to the time they started using the resource centre. One-third of respondents said they started their job since 1995. Another quarter (28%) reported a start date between 1991 and 1993.

The breakdown of occupations reported fell mostly into three types: sales and service occupations (28%); trades, transport and equipment operators (21%); and clerical occupations (17%). Please refer to Exhibit 3.4 for the breakdown of these and other occupations. Women were more likely than men to have held a job in a clerical occupation and men were much more likely than women to have held a job in a trade, transport or equipment operator occupation.

Exhibit 3.4 also presents the breakdown by industry. The most commonly cited industries were retail trade and manufacturing (15% and 13% respectively). Once again, differences are significant by gender with men being more likely than women to report working in manufacturing or construction, and women more likely than men to work in service industries.



The majority of the jobs held were year-round (62%), although about a quarter (25%) were temporary or casual in nature and 12% were reported to be seasonal work. The average number of hours worked was 35. Men were more likely than women to report having worked more than 40 hours per week. In terms of weekly pay reported for the job, the average weekly income was $349. Generally, women reported earning less than men (consistent with working fewer hours per week).

Equal proportions of respondents reported their job ending in either 1995 or 1996 (33% and 31% respectively). The most common reason reported for the termination of the job was layoff (60%) followed by dissatisfaction with the job and personal or family responsibilities (11% and 14% respectively).

B. Use of Income Transfers and Income

Exhibit 3.5 presents jobLink participants' use of income transfers in the three years prior to using the resource centre and in the year prior to using the resource centre, as well as their earnings and income during the same time periods. In general, participants relied significantly on income transfers to supplement their earnings prior to using the resource centre. In the three years prior to using the resource centre, average annual income from wage earnings was less than from income transfers.

C. Status Before Using jobLink Resource Centres

Of those who had a job in the two years prior to using the centre, the average number of weeks respondents reported being unemployed was 41. Of the time they were not working, they spent an average of 37 weeks looking for work.

EXHIBIT 3.5
Use of Income Transfers: Administrative Data

	3 Years Prior to Program Year: Annual Average
Regular EI weeks paid	3.6
Regular EI benefits paid	$795
Total EI weeks paid[1]	4.7
Total EI benefits	$1,050
Total social assistance benefits	$4,430
Total gross earnings[2]	$3,225

[1] Includes regular EI plus other EI benefits such as maternity.
[2] Includes employment earnings.

3.3 Summary

The profile of jobLink resource centre clients indicates that those who use the resource centre have generally established a prior attachment to the workforce. Only a minority of clients had never worked prior to using the RC and two-thirds had worked full time. The most common reason for unemployment was layoff. These data also indicate a reasonably high level of education among the client group. Almost half reported having a post-secondary education. On the other hand, a substantial proportion (almost one in five) had not completed high school.

The data also suggest significant economic insecurity within the client group. Prior work experience was largely confined to traditionally low wage, lower skill sectors such as sales and services and clerical occupations. One-third were temporary in nature. Few clients reported owning their own home and there was a strong reliance on income transfers in the period prior to using the resource centre.

4. *Profile of Adjustment and Employment Services*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a profile of the types of services utilized, first, by jobLink clients and, second, by the comparison group. Both self-serve and staff-assisted services are examined in this chapter, as well as respondents' satisfaction with the services they received.

4.1 Awareness, Motivations and Expectations

Most clients first found out about the jobLink resource centre from their welfare worker (38%) or via word-of-mouth (29%) (Exhibit 4.1). In terms of the types of services and/or assistance respondents were hoping to receive, the most commonly cited service (49%) was listings of job postings or vacancies. The next most sought after service was job search advice such as résumé writing or job interview skills (30%). Other desired services, in order of frequency of mention, included: information on training and education programs; information on the local job market; access to a computer; and access to equipment such as a photocopier, fax machine, or telephone. These findings are presented in Exhibit 4.2.

EXHIBIT 4.1
Awareness

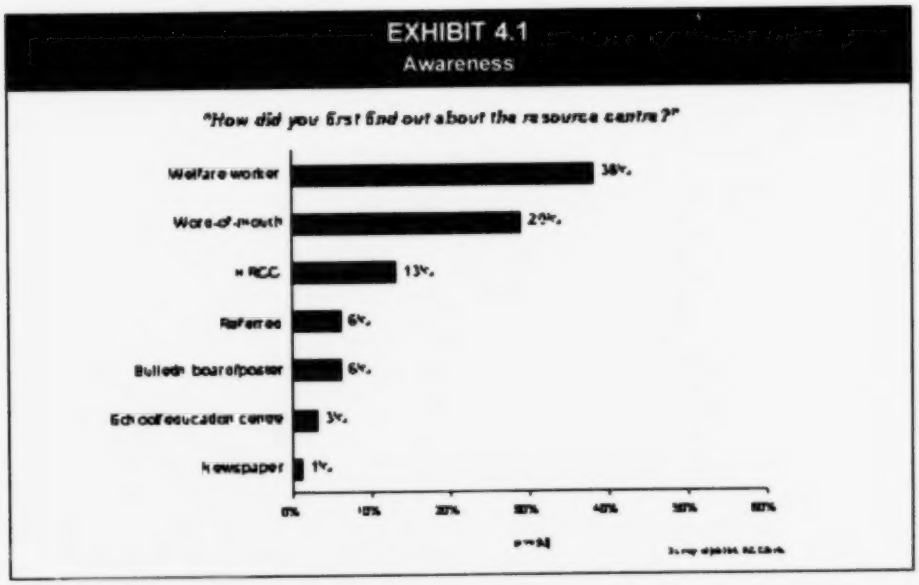
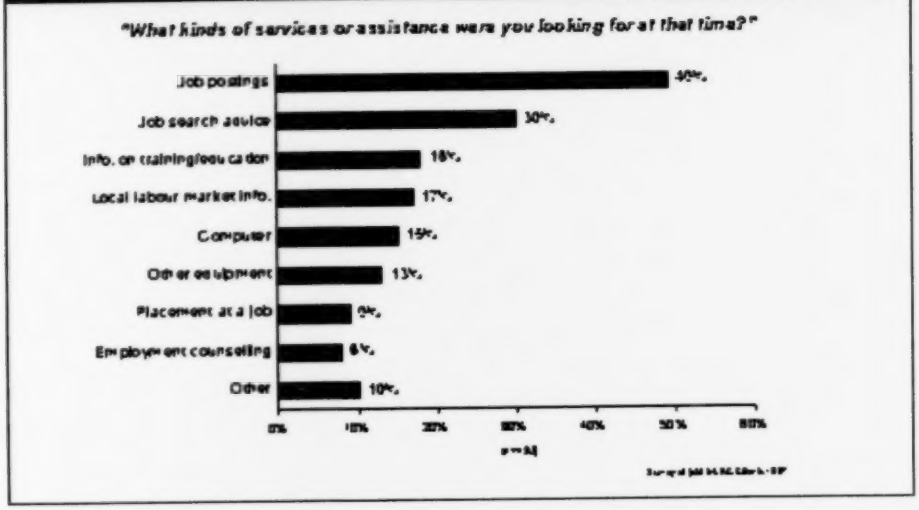


EXHIBIT 4.2
Needs



Significant differences in the types of services desired by respondents can be broken down by education. In particular, respondents with a post-secondary education more likely than those with high school or less to want the use of equipment and access to a computer.

4.2 Program Services

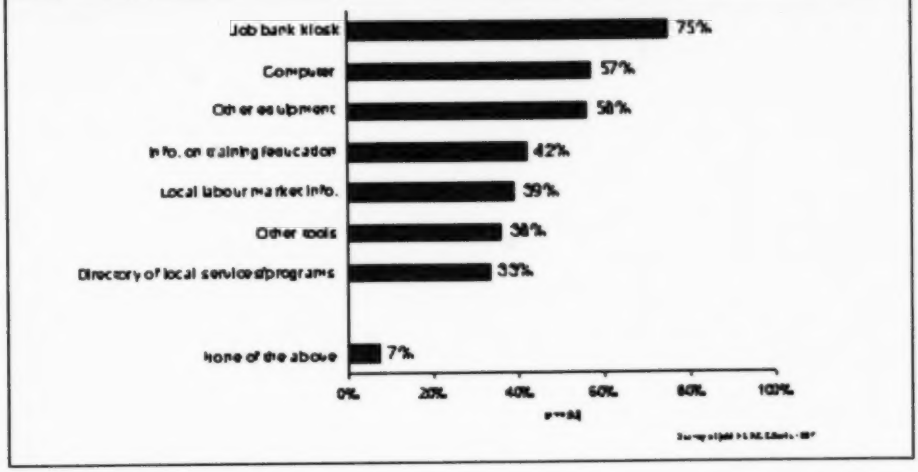
A. Frequency of Use

The frequency of use of the resource centre was highly variable. Overall, 19% of clients reported calling or visiting the centre one to two times only. Conversely, 18% said that they used the centre more than 50 times. Another 17% said that they visited the centre three to five times. The remaining respondents fell somewhere in the middle with 13% using the centre six to ten times; 11% using it 11 to 20 times; and 14% using the centre 21 to 50 times. Men tended to visit the resource centre more frequently than women.

B. Self-Serve Services

Virtually all jobLink clients (93%) had used at least one of the self-serve products available at the resource centre. The most commonly used self-serve service was the job bank kiosk listings of postings or vacancies with three-quarters of respondents reporting that they had used this service. The next two most commonly cited self-serve services were: use of the resource centre computer (57% of respondents); and use of equipment such as the photocopier, fax or telephone (56%). Exhibit 4.3 presents the findings for these and other services.

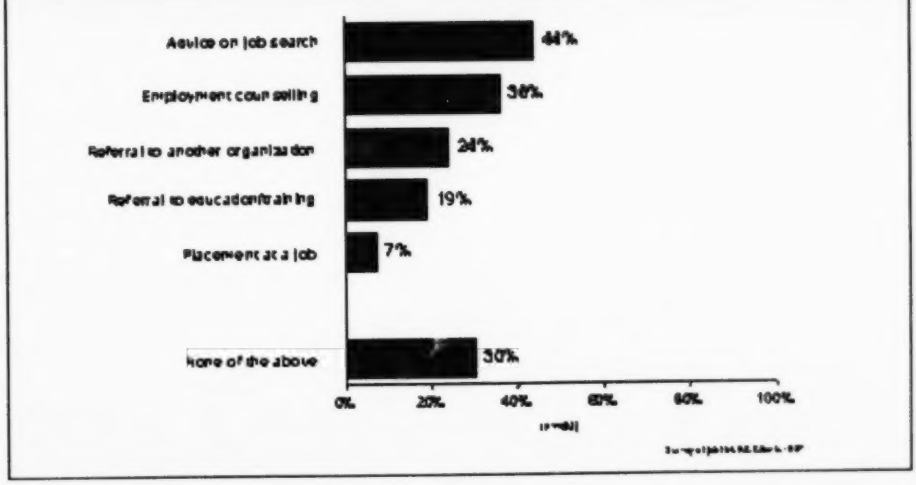
EXHIBIT 4.3
Use of Self-Serve Services



C. Staff-Directed Services

Exhibit 4.4 presents the findings for the use of staff-assisted services. Two out of three jobLink clients reported receiving staff-assisted services through the resource centre. Forty-four percent of respondents reported receiving staff assistance on how to write a résumé or conduct a job interview. The next most common staff-assisted service reported by respondents was employment counselling (36%), followed by referral to another organization that provides employment, training or personal assistance (24%).

EXHIBIT 4.4
Use of Staff-Assisted Services



D. Referrals

In all, 43% of jobLink clients said they had been referred either to another organization (24%) or to an education or training program (19%). These respondents were then asked a series of questions about that referral.

The most commonly cited service to which these clients were referred was an education or training program with 36% citing this service (this number is not surprising since 19% had already stated that they received a referral for an education or training program). Other services to which respondents were referred include: listings of job postings or vacancies (14%); lists of local services and programs that help people find a job (12%); employment counselling (10%); job search advice including résumé writing (10%); and job placement services (8%). Sixty-three percent of clients reported actually using the service to which they were referred.

E. Use of Other Employment Services

Most clients (79%) did not use any other types of employment services or assistance since they started to use the jobLink Resource Centre. Of those who had used other services, just over a third mentioned listings of job postings or vacancies (37%) and another 19% quoted an education or training program.

4.3 Satisfaction

A. Satisfaction with Services

Satisfaction levels with employment services among jobLink clients are generally moderate to high, with none of the satisfaction rating going below 65% satisfied (i.e., 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale). The self-serve services, which received the highest satisfaction ratings, were the use of equipment like the photocopier, fax, telephone, and the use of the resource centre computer. Ninety-one percent and 87%, respectively, of respondents were satisfied with these services. The remaining four self-serve services received moderate approval ratings with the proportion satisfied ranging between 65 and 69%. Please refer to Exhibit 4.5.

Satisfaction with staff-assisted services was also high. The service receiving the highest satisfaction rating was assistance with résumé writing and preparation for a job interview with 82% satisfied. Of those who had participated in a job placement, 78% were satisfied. Employment counselling and referral to an education or training program received support 74 and 72% of the time, respectively. Exhibit 4.6 presents these findings.

EXHIBIT 4.5
Rated Satisfaction with Self-Serve Services

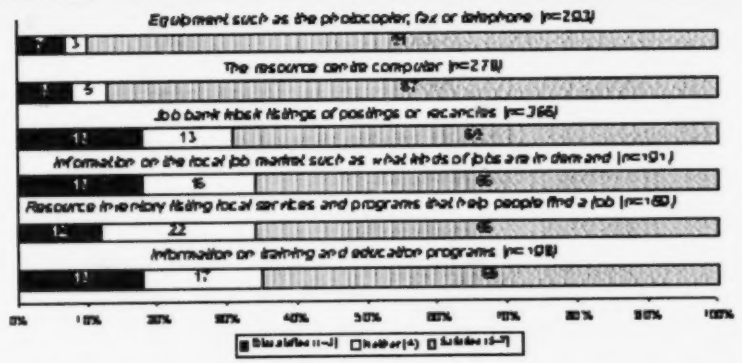
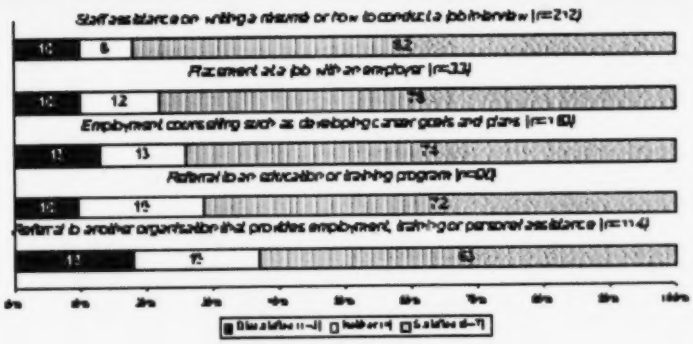

Equipment such as the photocopier, fax or telephone (n=203)
The resource centre computer (n=278)
Job bank listings of postings or vacancies (n=366)
Information on the local job market such as what kinds of jobs are in demand (n=191)
Resource inventory listing local services and programs that help people find a job (n=160)
Information on training and education programs (n=108)

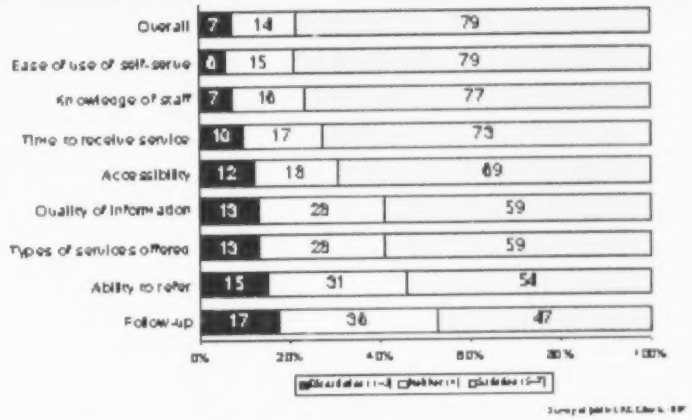
EXHIBIT 4.6
Rated Satisfaction with Staff-Assisted Services


Staff assistance on writing a résumé or how to conduct a job interview (n=212)
Placement at a job with an employer (n=33)
Employment counselling such as developing career goals and plans (n=150)
Referral to an education or training program (n=90)
Referral to another organization that provides employment, training or personal assistance (n=114)

B. Satisfaction with Resource Centres

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of aspects of the resource centres. Exhibit 4.7 presents the results.

EXHIBIT 4.7
Rated Satisfaction with Resource Centres



The highest satisfaction rating was received for the resource centre overall with fully 79% choosing 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point satisfaction scale. Clients who said they had used staff-assisted services were more likely to rate the resource centre higher overall than those who had not used staff-assisted services. Four other measures also received high satisfaction ratings: ease of use of self-serve products (79%); the level of knowledge of staff (77% satisfied; higher if respondent had used staff-assisted services); how quickly they were able to receive services and assistance (73% satisfied; higher if respondent used self-serve services); and the accessibility of the centre in terms of its location and parking (69% satisfied).

The items receiving lower satisfaction ratings include: the quality of information available on the labour market (59% satisfied; but higher if used self-serve services); the types of programs and services offered (workshops, counselling, advice) (59% satisfied; higher if used staff-assisted services); the ability of resource centre to refer individuals to the right services (54% satisfied); and the follow-up provided by staff (47% satisfied).

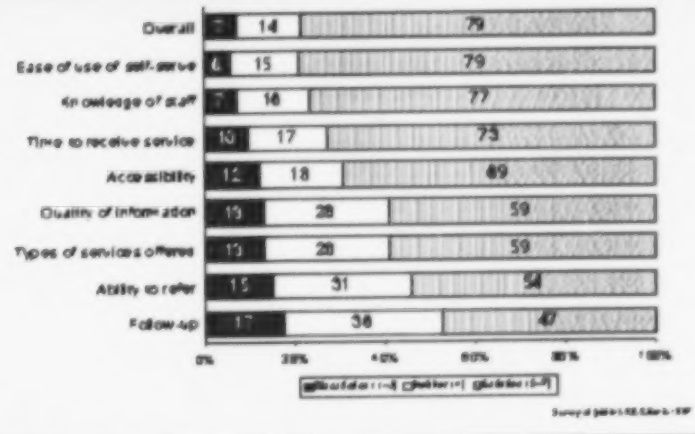
Of the small number who were dissatisfied with the resource centre overall, most (48%) said that it was because the resources were not helpful or were outdated. A similar proportion was dissatisfied because the resource centre did not help them find a job.

While they understood that it is difficult to tailor services to individuals given resource limitations, focus group participants expressed a desire for greater refinement or targeting

B. Satisfaction with Resource Centres

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of aspects of the resource centres. Exhibit 4.7 presents the results.

EXHIBIT 4.7
Rated Satisfaction with Resource Centres



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Of the small number who were dissatisfied with the resource centre overall, most (48%) said that it was because the resources were not helpful or were outdated. A similar proportion was dissatisfied because the resource centre did not help them find a job.

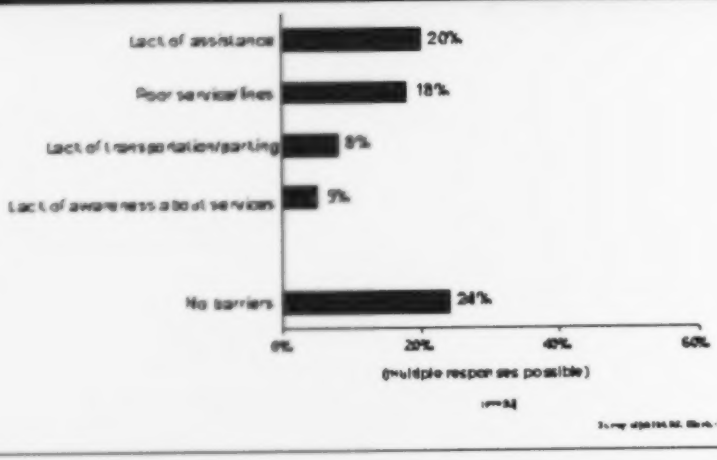
While they understood that it is difficult to tailor services to individuals given resource limitations, focus group participants expressed a desire for greater refinement or targeting

of the resource centre's services. It was noted that the resource centre provides the tools and some basic skills to conduct a job search. Participants felt, however, that some services needed to be more tailored to the varying skill levels of the client. This would entail providing both services to clients with intermediate level skills, for example, a self-employment program, as well as providing services to clients with more specialized needs, such as longer term one-on-one counselling.

C. Barriers

jobLink clients were asked to mention any barriers they had experienced accessing the resource centre (if any). In fact, 24% of respondents could not think of any barriers. However, of those who did mention some problems, they included: lack of assistance in finding the information or services they needed (20%); poor service and having to stand in line (18%); the accessibility of the centre (8%); and the lack of information or knowledge about the resource centre itself (5%). Please refer to Exhibit 4.8 for these findings.

EXHIBIT 4.8
Perceived Barriers

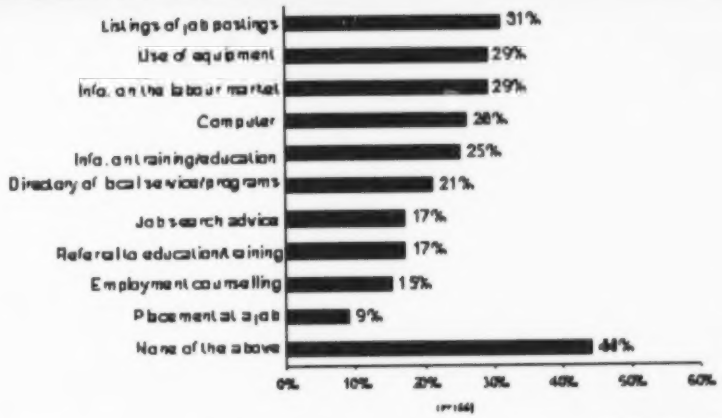


4.4 Comparison Group Activities

The extent to which the comparison group of non-participants was able to access employment services was examined in this evaluation. Use of employment services by the comparison group was much less frequent and was also patterned somewhat differently compared with the jobLink group. jobLink participants were more likely to access virtually all of the types of employment services, both self-directed and staff-assisted, compared with the comparison group. The comparison group, however, was more likely to report receiving a referral to training or education and job placement (Exhibit 4.9). The satisfaction ratings for the services received were not significantly different between jobLink participants and the comparison group.

EXHIBIT 4.9

Use of Employment Services: Comparison Group



4.5 Summary

The profile of adjustment and employment services presented above indicates a high level of usage of services among jobLink clients, particularly compared with the comparison group. Virtually all jobLink participants had accessed self-directed services such as job bank kiosks and the resource centre equipment. As well, two-thirds reported receiving assistance from staff such as job search advice and employment counselling. jobLink clients were somewhat less likely than the comparison group to have received a referral for a training or education program. Rated satisfaction with resource centre services and the quality of service was generally high (though not significantly higher than ratings of services provided by their counterparts in the comparison group). Participants' profiles of adjustment and employment services closely parallel their initial expectations or services they were looking for in using the resource centre. Lack of assistance in finding needed information and services and poor service were mentioned as weaknesses by some jobLink clients.

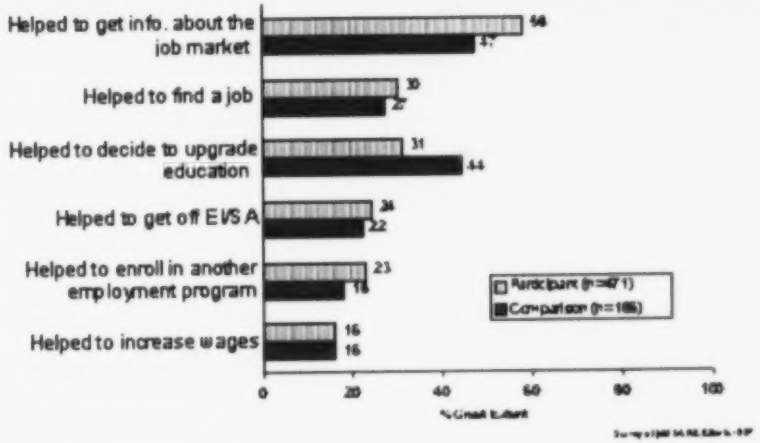
5. *Client Impacts*

Client impacts of jobLink were examined from two perspectives: clients' subjective ratings of the benefits of the resource centre; and clients' objective outcomes such as their current employment status and non-labour market outcomes (e.g., attitudes and satisfaction with other aspects of their life). Both subjective and objective outcomes are compared with the results of non-participants. These findings are presented below.

5.1 Rated Benefits

Exhibit 5.1 presents respondents' responses in terms of the perceived benefits of the jobLink resource centre services and the corresponding ratings of the benefits of employment services received by the comparison group. In general, neither the participants nor the comparison group provided high ratings of the benefits of the employment services they received, though the ratings of the participants tend to be marginally higher. The highest rated benefit for both groups was helping individuals to get information about the job market. Participants provided a significantly higher rating of this benefit with 58% indicating they had benefited "to a great extent" compared to 47% of the comparison group.

EXHIBIT 5.1
Rated Benefits of jobLink Employment Services



Just under one-third of participants believed that the jobLink resource centre had helped them to find a job (30%) and to decide to upgrade their education (31%). In terms of the latter, the comparison group provided a significantly higher rating of the benefits of their employment services than jobLink participants.

Both jobLink participants and the comparison group provided lower ratings of services in terms of helping them to get off social assistance or employment insurance and helping them to enroll in another employment program. Only a smaller proportion of respondents — 16% in both groups — believed that the employment services they received had helped them to increase their wages.

jobLink clients who had received the more intensive staff-assisted services rated the benefits more highly on most of the aspects listed. Not surprisingly, jobLink participants who were employed at the time of the survey also provided higher ratings of the benefits of the resource centre in terms of helping them to find a job and helping them to get off social assistance or employment insurance.

5.2 Employment Status

The following sections present the results of the bivariate survey data analysis of program outcomes (including labour market outcomes such as employment and use of income transfers and non-labour market outcomes such as satisfaction). Note that these data do not control for pre-existing differences between the participant and comparison groups. The results of the multivariate analysis, which controls for these variables, are presented in the final section of this report.

jobLink participants were significantly more likely to have looked for work than the comparison group (91% and 75%) (Exhibit 5.2). The most frequently used job search methods for both groups were sending out résumés or applications and answering ads. The comparison group was somewhat more likely than jobLink participants to make use of informal job search methods such as through family and friends.

Since starting to use the jobLink resource centre, 42% of clients had found a full-time or part-time job or worked at their own business. This is significantly higher than the 30% of the comparison group who had found employment during the same period.

At the time of the interview, 22% of jobLink participants were employed full-time, 14% were employed part-time and 2% were self-employed. Based on the bivariate results, the participant group was significantly more likely to be employed full-time than the comparison group. Similar proportions, 44% of clients and 41% of the comparison group, were unemployed and looking for work at the time of the interview. About one in five clients were out of the labour market, either in school, a homemaker or not looking for work. The "out of the labour market" individuals are over-represented among the comparison group. Of those who were not currently working, the majority of respondents in both groups were interested in entering the labour market in the next 12 months.

EXHIBIT 5.2
Job Search Activity and Employment Status

	Participant	Comparison Group
Looked for work since using the jobLink resource centre/reference date		
Yes	91	75
No	9	24
Job search activity		
Sent résumés, application	61	62
Answered ads	42	34
Made personal visits to employer	45	43
CEC/checked job bank	43	34
Made telephone inquiries with employers	30	31
Word-of-mouth	25	39
Private employment agency	11	7
Other	13	15
Number of weeks looking for work		
1-25	50	34
26-50	24	14
51-75	19	37
75+	7	16
Have had a job since using the resource centre/reference date		
Yes	42	30
No	58	69
Current employment status (multiple responses possible)		
Self-employed	2	1
Employed full-time	22	13
Employed part-time	14	16
Unemployed and looking for work	44	41
Unemployed and not looking for work	7	16
Student/going to school	11	9
Homemaker	2	5
Interest in entering the labour force in next 12 months		
Not interested	5	15
Somewhat	3	5
Interested	91	80

5.3 Current Job

Of respondents who reported having a job, the jobs that were found by the jobLink participant group were more likely to be full-time and year-round (though not statistically significant). The earnings for the participant group were also higher (though this is at least a partial reflection of the greater number of hours worked). Both the participants and the comparison group were concentrated in sales, service, and clerical occupations (Exhibit 5.3). jobLink participants spent significantly fewer weeks unemployed during the post-program period than the comparison group.

Within the jobLink group, the job characteristics were predictably different along gender lines with women more likely to be in sales and service and clerical occupations compared with men who were over-represented in trades, transport and equipment operator positions. Women were also more likely than men to be working part-time and also had lower average weekly earnings as a consequence. Weekly employment earnings were highest for clients in the middle age category (31 to 45) and for clients who had a full-time job prior to using the resource centre.

EXHIBIT 5.3
Current Job Characteristics

	Participant	Comparison
Number of employers		
One	60	69
2-3	34	29
4 or more	6	3
Hours per week		
1-29	31	48
30-40	48	36
41+	21	17
Type of job		
Year-round	58	49
Temporary or casual	26	38
Seasonal	12	12
Don't know	5	1
Average weekly earnings	$320	$261
Average number of weeks not working since using the jobLink resource centre/ comparison group reference date	41	46

5.4 Income and Utilization of Public Support

jobLink participants were significantly more likely to have collected employment insurance in the post-program period than the comparison group in the bivariate analysis (Exhibit 5.4). Both the participant and comparison groups were likely to have accessed social assistance in the post-program period, though there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. jobLink participants, however, did collect social assistance for a shorter period of time compared with non-participants.

EXHIBIT 5.4
Income and Utilization of Public Support

	Participant	Comparison
Since using the jobLink resource centre/ comparison group reference date ever collected EI		
Yes	15	7
No	84	92
Average number of weeks collected EI	21	27
Since using the jobLink resource centre/ comparison group reference date ever collected social assistance		
Yes	74	69
No	25	31
Don't know	1	1
Average number of months collected welfare	12	15
Household income		
$10K or less	29	32
$10K-$15K	33	30
$16K-25K	24	23
25K+	15	15
Personal income		
$10K or less	52	55
$10K-$15K	29	26
$16K-25K	15	13
$25K+	5	7

There were few differences between the participant and comparison groups in terms of household and personal income. jobLink clients' current household income was $16,870 on average compared with $16,980 for the comparison group. Personal income was $11,080 for jobLink clients on average, compared with $11,353 for the comparison group. Almost two-thirds of clients (65%) reported that it was difficult for them to live on their total household income. One in five said living on their current household income was somewhat difficult and 12% responded not difficult.

Income levels were higher for clients who were currently employed and who had stronger prior work experience. Older clients (over 45 years of age) reported lower household incomes and also expressed greater difficulty in living on their current income.

5.5 Non-Labour Market Outcomes

A limited number of measures were included on the survey instrument to capture other possible outcomes not related to employability. Exhibit 5.5 shows satisfaction levels at the time of the interview on dimensions such as skills and security. Overall, the jobLink resource centre clients have a moderate degree of confidence in their skills — 65% are satisfied with their current business or job skills. Just under half of clients are satisfied with the level of control they feel they have over their life. Not surprisingly, satisfaction with overall financial security is rated lowest on this battery with only one in five feeling satisfied with this aspect of their life. There were no significant differences between the responses of the participant and comparison groups.

Clients who are currently employed express greater satisfaction on each of these indicators. Satisfaction with level of financial security decreases with the age of the respondent but increases with respondent's personal income. Satisfaction with skills is associated with higher levels of education.

EXHIBIT 5.5
Personal Satisfaction

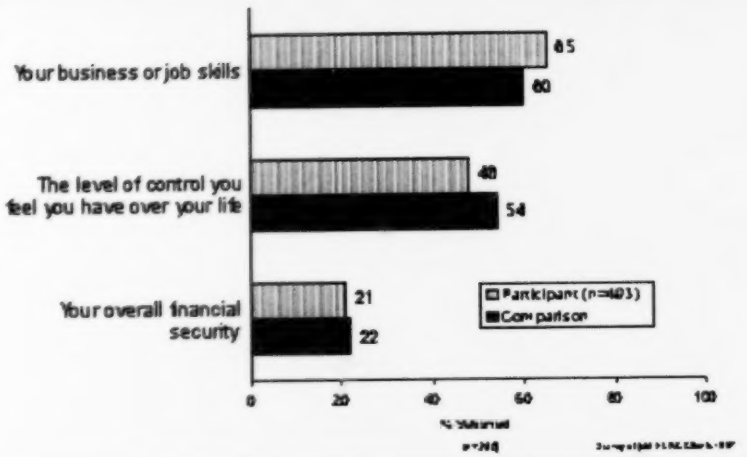
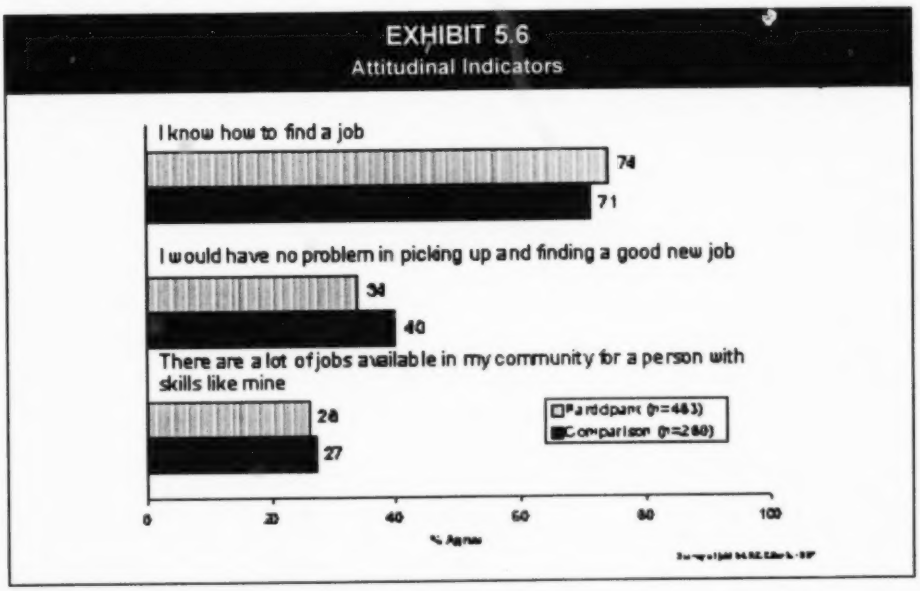


Exhibit 5.6 presents the results of a second series of attitudinal indicators. Most clients and those in the comparison group are confident in their abilities to search for work (74% and 71% respectively agree they know how to find a job). There is, however, pessimism around actually finding a job. About one in three clients agreed that they would have no problem in picking up and finding a good new job. The comparison group expressed greater confidence on this item. The responses indicate that most respondents attribute this lack of flexibility to local labour market conditions. Only one in four jobLink clients and a similar proportion in the comparison group agreed that there are a lot of jobs available in their community for a person with skills like theirs. Those with lower personal incomes are more likely to feel that they would have trouble finding a good new job. Clients in the older age category have the greatest degree of pessimism around demand for the skills in their community.



5.6 Multivariate Analysis

An essential question in the analysis is the *incremental* impact of jobLink on participants. Simple comparisons between program participants and non-participants on key outcome indicators (e.g., employment status) may yield a biased estimate of program impact because of pre-existing differences between the comparison groups and the jobLink participants. To ensure that differences in measured outcomes were not the effect of pre-existing differences between the jobLink and the comparison groups such as differences in terms of their labour market history and background characteristics, multivariate analyses were conducted.

Six dependent variables representing key outcome variables were tested:

- whether respondents were employed or not at the time of the interview (discrete);
- whether respondents were full-time employed or not at the time of the interview (discrete);
- number of weeks unemployed during the post-program period (continuous);
- number of weeks on EI during the post-program period (continuous);
- personal satisfaction (continuous, represented by an index of respondents' rated satisfaction with their financial security, business/work skills and level of control over their life);
- confidence in the labour market (continuous, presented by respondents' rating to the item "I would have no problem picking up and finding a good new job").

A broad number of independent variables were included in the analysis to assess antecedent conditions such as sociodemographic characteristics, prior labour market experience and type of intervention. Specifically, variables that were included in the analysis are listed below. Unless otherwise stated, the source of the data is the survey conducted as part of the evaluation.

- age;
- sex;
- education (no post-secondary education/post-secondary education);
- marital status (married or not);
- number of dependants;
- site;
- ever full-time employed pre-program;
- number of weeks employed pre-program;
- gross earnings three years prior (source: HRDC administrative data);
- EI benefits three years prior (source: HRDC administrative data);
- social assistance benefits three years prior (source: MCSS administrative data);
- whether actively looked for work or not;
- whether used self-assisted services or not;
- whether used staff-assisted services or not;
- employed or not prior to using resource centre/reference date.

A flag representing participant versus comparison groups was included among the independent variables to measure the impact of the jobLink intervention compared with the outcomes for the non-participant comparison group. The coefficients for the group variable measures the difference in the dependent variables between the participant and comparison groups, controlling for all measured pre-existing differences. Dummy coding was used for all categorical variables.

Multiple regression was utilized for the continuous dependent variables while logistic regression was used to test the categorical variables. The modelling process was conducted in two stages. First, a base model was developed to control for the basic sociodemographic and labour market characteristics of respondents, such as age, sex and education. The jobLink program variable was also included. The coefficient and significance level of the program variable in the base model would indicate the impact of the program on the outcome variables after controlling the background characteristics of the respondents. The full model includes a more comprehensive set of independent variables, specifically, the use of self-directed and staff-assisted services. The purpose of this model is to better understand the effect of the use of different types of services.

The coefficient and significance level for the program variable for each of the independent variables tested in the base and full models are presented in Exhibit 5.7. The overall tolerance level for each of the models is also included as a measure of collinearity. The detailed regression results are reproduced in a separate technical appendix.

EXHIBIT 5.7
Coefficient and Significance of the Program Variable

	Employed/ Not	Full-time Employed/ Not	Weeks Not Working	Weeks on EI	Months Social Assistance	Personal Satisfaction	Confidence in the Labour Market
Base Model							
Tolerance			0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67
Coefficient	0.0763	0.4593	-5.16	0.80	-1.747	-.09	-.39
Significance	0.7715	0.1646	0.1281	0.3361	0.1081	0.5404	0.0648
N	613	613	606	646	574	646	646
Full Model							
Tolerance			0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
Coefficient	0.2364	0.3068	-8.39	0.3744	-2.8	-.01	-.55
Significance	0.4274	0.4014	0.0274	0.6878	0.0201	0.9358	0.0215
N	613	613	606	646	574	646	646

Briefly, the multivariate analysis provides some indication of the potential impacts of jobLink, though these impacts appear to be relatively short term. There is a statistically significant reduction in the time not working following the program intervention for the jobLink participants — eight weeks. This also translates into a significant difference between the participant and comparison groups in terms of amount of time collecting social assistance during the post-program period. jobLink participants collected social assistance 2.8 months less during the post-program period compared with non-participants.

The remaining indicators such as employment status and weeks on EI were not significant in the multivariate analysis. The latter finding — weeks on EI — is perhaps not surprising given that respondents would have had to find and lose a job (in significant numbers) during the post-program period in order to collect EI. The analysis, however, also may not

have been sensitive enough to capture other impacts given the relatively small number of cases available, as well as other challenges around constructing the participant and comparison group sampling frames. Employment during the post-program period was influenced by respondents' sex (men had more positive outcomes than women), age (younger respondents were more likely to have found work), marital status (married respondents were more likely to be working), whether the individual had looked for work and level of prior earnings (those with higher earnings were more likely to be employed).

The multivariate analysis of the non-labour market outcomes suggests that there is no significant difference between the participant and comparison groups with respect to personal satisfaction. The comparison group, however, reported higher levels of confidence in the labour market.

5.7 Summary

Perceived ratings of the benefits of adjustment and employment services were modest for both the jobLink participant and comparison groups. While most respondents looked for work (higher among the jobLink group), re-employment rates were generally low; less than half of both groups were employed at the time of the survey. A significant positive advantage for the participant group in terms of employment status faded in the multivariate analysis, which indicated that pre-existing differences between the two groups accounted for the difference. Sex, age, marital status and prior labour market experiences were more important in predicting outcomes. A positive advantage for the jobLink group in terms of weeks not working in the post-program period was maintained in the multivariate analysis (though this should be interpreted cautiously given the difference in the timing of the surveys for the two groups). The jobLink group spent significantly less time not working (8 weeks) during the post-program period than the comparison group and this translated into less reliance on social assistance (2.8 months). The jobs that were found by the jobLink participants were more likely to be year-round and full-time with higher earnings than the comparison group. There were few differences between jobLink participants and the comparison group in terms of non-labour market outcomes.

6. Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Summary

jobLink resource centres were an important component of the jobLink Ontario initiative introduced in 1994. The centres were designed to provide co-ordinated employment services to social assistance recipients in order to improve employability and encourage self-sufficiency. The jobLink Ontario initiative was terminated, however, less than two years later. Since that time, the jobLink resource centres included in this evaluation have sought funding from other sources such as municipal, provincial and federal governments. The simultaneous downsizing at HRDC also had a perceived negative impact on many resource centres because of reductions in available staff time and access to training funds. Not all resource centres have survived intact and the future of existing sites is uncertain given the significant changes that are occurring in provincial and federal government responses to employment issues. The introduction of Ontario Works at the provincial level and the future devolution of responsibility for training from the federal to provincial governments will be important factors in shaping the future of resource centres.

While the jobLink Ontario initiative has ended, the evaluation of resource centres initially funded by the program provides insights into partnership models for service delivery, program impacts from the perspective of the client, and benefits to the community infrastructure. An initial process evaluation of jobLink resource centres provided evidence on delivery issues. This study builds on this evaluation work and also includes the perspective of clients regarding their experiences with the resource centres. It is difficult to provide generalisable conclusions given the significant variations among the different sites, particularly after funding was terminated and centralized co-ordination or guidelines were removed. Nevertheless, some trends are clear. The following sections highlight study findings organized by issue.

Client Impacts

jobLink resource centres were initially established to provide services targeted to social assistance recipients. While SARs remain the primary client group for resource centres, many services are open to all community residents who are unemployed and seeking work. The client profile of resource centres depends to some extent on the location of the centre, with off-site centres drawing a broader mix of clientele.

The profile of current jobLink clients presented in the report confirms a need for employment assistance. Clients generally have sporadic experience in the labour market and high reliance on income transfers, leading to poor prospects for obtaining employment for these workers.

jobLink clients are largely motivated to visit the resource centres to obtain practical information or assistance finding a job. Information on job vacancies and job search assistance were most often mentioned as the kinds of services clients were looking for at

the centre. The utilization of services was high (significantly higher than the comparison group) with almost all clients having accessed self-serve products and two-thirds receiving staff-assisted services. Reflecting their original motivations for visiting the resource centre, job bank kiosks and advice on job search were the most frequently used self-serve and staff-assisted services.

Satisfaction ratings of services are high to moderate with no significant differences in ratings between the participant and comparison groups. Self-serve products such as office equipment and the resource centre computer were very highly rated. Staff assistance on job search advice also received a high rating. Clients have found the information and services to be timely, easy to understand and easy to access. The majority of clients were also satisfied with the level of knowledge of staff. More than 80% of clients were satisfied with the resource centre overall.

Clients were somewhat less satisfied with the linkages to other local organizations through inventory listings or referrals from staff. Weaknesses in the resource centre were also identified in terms of the quality of information available, the types of services and programs offered by the resource centre and the referrals received through the centre. One in five clients indicated that obtaining information about what was available at the centre and waiting in line for assistance were barriers to using the centre. Lowest satisfaction ratings were for follow-up.

When asked to rate the benefits of the jobLink resource centre, the most important benefit from the clients' perspective was getting information about the job market. jobLink clients rated this benefit significantly higher than the comparison group. About one-third of clients felt that the resource centre had helped them to find a job. The comparison group provided higher ratings of the employment services they received in terms of helping them to upgrade their education.

While virtually all clients surveyed could be classified as in the labour force (either employed or interested in obtaining employment) and had actively searched for work, at the time of the interview, the current employment rate for the jobLink resource centre clients was only about 38% and only one in four were employed full-time. Forty-five percent reported that they were currently unemployed and looking for work. The relatively high unemployment rate reflects to a large extent the current competitiveness of the labour market in Ontario (about 9% unemployment). As well, the employment rates are a reflection of the client profile. A substantial proportion of clients — about one-half — lack recent work experience.

While jobLink participants initially showed more positive labour market outcomes than the comparison group, these differences largely disappeared when the multivariate analysis controlled for pre-existing differences between the two groups. Sociodemographic variables such as sex, age and marital status were important predictors of employment status. The greater likelihood that the jobLink participants were in the labour market (i.e., actively looking for work) was also an important factor. The multivariate analysis did, however, show a significant and positive advantage for the

participant group in terms of number of weeks of employment during the post-program period (an eight-week advantage). This translated into a reduction in use of social assistance by the participant group during the post-program period (2.8 months).

The reported utilization of public support, particularly social assistance, is quite high among both the client and comparison groups. This is not surprising given that most individuals would be clients *because* they were on social assistance. About one in five clients believed the resource centre had helped them to end their dependence on social assistance.

The current financial situation of clients and the comparison group is generally poor. Average household incomes are well below the average in Canada and the majority of respondents reported that they had difficulty in living on their current income. The majority of all respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with their current level of financial security.

Cost-Efficiency/Effectiveness

There is a lack of evidence collected in this evaluation to make a definitive judgement on the cost-efficiency or effectiveness of jobLink resource centres. In terms of organizational efficiency, jobLink resource centres were expected to result in savings through collocation of agencies and partnership arrangements, with organizations providing in-kind contributions such as staff time, computers and other equipment (e.g., job banks). The resource centres included in this evaluation have a variety of organizational arrangements. In Ottawa, no collocation arrangement was implemented; however, the resource centre has established partnerships consisting of in-kind contributions in order to provide specialized workshops for clients. In Sudbury Central, an initial partnership established with multiple agencies has now dissolved. In Toronto and Windsor, however, partnerships have been effective in pooling resources to provide integrated services to clients at one site.

According to process evaluation information and the data collected in this evaluation, cost of service varies considerably depending on the types of services provided, client volumes and the proportion of clients receiving self-directed versus staff-assisted services. As well, there are vagaries in the way sites calculate costs and count clients served. The cost per client served for Windsor was $199, for Ottawa $74, and for Sudbury Central the cost was $12. No cost figures were available for the Toronto sites. An overall average based on these figures is $95.

Cost-effectiveness of resource centres was also expected to be achieved in the longer term as social assistance recipients are assisted in finding jobs and attaining self-sufficiency. Sustainable employment leads to reduced costs for public support such as employment insurance and social assistance. According to the survey data, the success rate for jobLink clients — measured in terms of the proportion that are currently employed — is 38%. Based on the efficiency ratios noted above, we could extrapolate to calculate a cost per employed client of about $250.

Partnerships

Local municipalities, MCSS and HRDC are key partners in most of the resource centres examined here. Roles and responsibilities of government partners include providing funding, day-to-day administration of the resource centre (usually the municipal level) and providing linked services (e.g., HRDC literature and job bank listings are made available to the resource centre, and specialized expertise may be provided on a case-by-base basis by other partners).

In addition to government partners, most resource centres have sought partnerships with community-based organizations. These include, for example, local employment assistance agencies (perhaps targeted to youth or disadvantaged groups) and education institutions such as community colleges. In these cases, partnerships involve service delivery, with partner organizations providing particular services to clients/sub-groups of clients depending on their area of expertise. Partnerships with community-based service organizations may be based on service contracts, with third-party organizations providing services on a fee-for-service basis or staff members providing on-site services on a regular basis at the resource centre. Less work has been conducted on developing partnerships with industry in terms of leveraging contributions or in developing employment placements/opportunities for clients.

In some centres, partnerships have extended to the implementation of local advisory committees, which are closely involved in establishing resource centre goals and objectives and strategic decision-making. In Ottawa, an Interim Advisory Committee was assembled to prepare the proposal for the jobLink centres. Based on the success of this committee, the proposal recommended establishing a jobLink Planning and Review Committee, which would assist in the implementation and on-going operation of the resource centre. Members of this committee represent both service consumers and providers, as well as employers and members of organizations serving ethnic and visible minorities. The process evaluation of Windsor and Sudbury indicated that advisory committees could have benefits in terms of identification of community needs and enhancement of ownership. On the other hand, in communities that have not established local advisory committees, the resource centre engendered resentment among some community stakeholders initially, particularly if this level of involvement was initially promised but not delivered. Some resource centres noted that the short timeframes in which to establish the centres did not lend itself to extensive consultation and involvement of community partners.

According to key informants, the development of partnerships and the integration of services are demanding in terms of management and administration. Housing services and staff within the same organization presents challenges to blending the varying mandates, policies, levels of organization, skills and experience, reporting relationships and cultural expectations. This requires significant communication and clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities. While most resource centres use a team approach, it is important to have effective management in order to overcome resistance from "outside" or partner organizations and avoid fragmentation of services. A clear vision of goals and objectives and commitment of partners and staff to the vision are also paramount.

Community Impacts

Community impacts identified in the evaluation terms of reference include: enhancement of services/increase in service infrastructure; integration of services/creation of seamless one-stop shopping; and reduction in duplication of services. In terms of the first category — enhancement of services — key informants generally believed that resource centres had enhanced services by providing walk-in access to employment services that had not been available before. The evidence from the survey of clients indicates that the resource centre was the primary source of assistance for most clients — only one in five accessed other types of services or assistance that did not involve the resource centre.

Marketing, however, is an issue that was raised in several sites with respect to building infrastructure. New resource centres, particularly those that are located "off-site" (i.e., are not located in a social assistance office or co-located with an established agency) must build a clientele. This requires promotion and strong links with referral sources such as caseworkers and other community organizations, as well as direct promotion to clients in order to ensure broad access. This was somewhat less problematic for resource centres that employed a storefront approach or were located in a mall.

The sustainability of resource centres in the longer term with the termination in funding, however, is unclear. While the focus of Ontario Works on increasing self-sufficiency would seem to fit with resource centre objectives and activities, funding of activities is an ongoing issue.

In terms of integration of services, the collocation of organizations has been only moderately successful. In Windsor, for example, while the HRCC and resource centre is in the same building, only the municipal employment services are co-located. In Ottawa, no collocation agreement could be arranged. According to the process evaluation, community-based organizations sometimes resist collocation arrangements out of fear of losing funding. Integration of services is often accomplished through staffing arrangements, which entail staff from partner organizations providing services on-site at the resource centre on a regular basis. Key factors for successful collocation include clear articulation of roles and responsibilities of partners and communication within the office with respect to procedures and goals and objectives.

Key informants agreed that there are significant benefits to service integration for clients. Collocation arrangements allow clients to access a variety of services at one site. This increases the likelihood that clients will utilize the various employment services and also decreases the cost and inconvenience for clients. As reported in the process evaluation, collocation can also have benefits for staff in terms of informal training and professional development among the representatives from different agencies.

Reducing duplication was expected to be a positive outcome as resource centres improved co-ordination and integration of services provided by various levels of government. According to the process evaluation of jobLink Resource Centres, there was little needs analysis research conducted prior to the implementation of jobLink. As a result, many communities did not have a clear understanding of the gaps in services or the extent of

duplication. The elimination of duplication is probably the least clear of the impacts of resource centres. Key informants generally believed that recent reductions in government funding for employment services, as well as funding cuts among NGOs meant that gaps in services were more likely to be a problem than duplication.

Case Management

While the focus of resource centre activities is on social assistance recipients, most centres can and will provide assistance to other groups as well such as employment insurance recipients and other unemployed individuals (e.g., youth). While some resource centres initially experimented with a referral process, clients are now drawn from a variety of sources. Welfare worker referrals are still the most frequent source of information about the resource centre, however, word-of-mouth is also important. In the Ottawa West RC, roughly one-third of clients are "walk-ins"; this was attributed to their highly visible storefront location.

The resource centres examined in this evaluation provide a wide variety of self-serve and staff-assisted products and services to clients. Self-serve products typically include job listings, office equipment, and public access computers and labour market information. Staff-assisted services include assistance in planning and conducting a job search, general employment counselling, and referrals to other organizations.

Interviewees agreed that the quality of staff — skills and ability to deal effectively with clients — were key to the success of the resource centres. The process evaluation of jobLink resource centres and the evaluation of the Toronto jobLink resource centres identified staff training as an important issue. Uneven service in some resource centres was attributed to a lack of attention to staff training and development issues. Staff require both technical skills to assist clients with computer-related skills and access, and softer skills related to assessment, coaching and conflict resolution.

Monitoring and tracking of resource centre clients is usually conducted using customized databases or, in some smaller centres, manually. All resource centres have a registration form upon which the client record is based (this may be limited to staff-assisted clients only). While the registration forms can be unique to the centre, information that is collected includes: basic tombstone information, sociodemographic variables such as sex, age, education and language, and work history. Resource centres also collect information on client employment activities, though this is largely limited to staff-assisted services such as participation in workshops, referrals and so on. Use of self-serve products is not rigorously tracked by the resource centres. As well, while resource centres generally produce monthly statistics and quarterly reports on throughput indicators such as service utilization and client volumes, there is less emphasis on tracking outcomes related to employability.

The extent to which clients are monitored varies from centre to centre. One centre monitors clients every three months. The Windsor Resource Centre conducts regular satisfaction surveys with clients. From the perspective of clients, the follow-up procedures are currently not sufficient — this aspect had the lowest satisfaction rating among the

items tested. Although attendance at workshops and individual counselling are monitored in Ottawa, there has been no method to monitor the use of self-serve services. The use of a suggestion box, however, has provided some feedback from clients.

6.2 Conclusions

In sum, resource centres provide employment services to clients who are in need of assistance to improve their job prospects. The survey data clearly indicate that the jobLink group had far greater access to employment services and programs than the comparison group. While some of the benefits of resource centres appear quite modest — less than one-third say the resource centre helped them to find a job — this must be interpreted in light of the challenging profile of the target client group. The survey results indicate that while the jobLink client group showed a significant employment advantage compared with the comparison group, this was due to pre-existing differences between the two groups. There are, however, positive benefits attributable in terms of length of unemployment and type of employment found in the post-program period.

In terms of the operation of the resource centres themselves, jobLink has led to the development of partnerships, greater integration of services and enhanced community capacity. However, funding issues, difficulties in effectively managing partnerships and efficient monitoring have posed barriers for some centres and led to weaknesses in delivery. As well, the movement away from a case management approach to a more self-serve model in some centres will have an impact on resource centre's ability to assist the full range of their clients' needs. Greater communication, both within offices and with clients, as well as continued community development, were identified as key elements for future success.

6.3 Recommendations

1. Collocation

The jobLink initiative was intended to involve various levels of government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to provide integrated services to social assistance recipients. While physical collocation was not achieved in many of the sites included in this evaluation, the collocation of organizations is reported to lead to numerous benefits.[12] Collocation offers many advantages both to organizations (e.g., increased efficiency, staff collaboration and sharing) and to clients (e.g., expanded availability of services, "one-stop" access to programs). The use of various self-serve products and referrals by participants interviewed for this evaluation suggests that clients themselves desire access to the broadest possible services offered by adjacent organizations. Future initiatives that aim at developing the employment resource centre model should give careful consideration to collocated arrangements among governments (federal, provincial and municipal employment services) and community partners. The collocation may involve

12 See, for example, KPMG Project Report, *CASC Process Review — Moving Towards an Integrated Service Delivery System*, Edmonton, Alberta, 1997.

varying levels of integration from itinerant collocation of staff to greater integration and sharing of resources and management/administration.

2. Service Provision

The evidence gathered in this evaluation suggests that jobLink participants were very satisfied with the self-directed and staff-assisted services they received. While the move to greater self-directed services was viewed as positive and provides expanded access to employment support services, it should also be noted that many participants did not appear to be adequately equipped to make use of some of these services on their own. For participants, the most significant gap in programming was information on the types of services that were available at the resource centre and initial orientation/support on how to best make use of the services. The case management approach, whether conducted by the resource centre itself or a third-party organization, should consider a process for assessing clients' needs/skills prior to referral to an employment resource centre. As well, future efforts in providing self-directed services to unemployed clients should include orientation sessions and access to staff support in the employment resource centre itself. This implies a need for highly trained staff who are familiar with the resources available, highly computer literate and have strong case management/counselling skills.

3. Local Advisory Committees

Several of the sites that were included in this jobLink evaluation had difficulty in establishing local or community advisory committees. However, in areas where local advisory committees were functioning, the committees proved to be very important in the success of the site by broadening ownership of the initiative and pooling expertise. Committees, composed of community representatives, are also important in examining areas of service needs and duplication to create a more seamless infrastructure. Finally, involvement of community partners ensures that clients receive appropriate referrals when necessary. In future initiatives, the importance of and capacity necessary for establishing successful partnerships should be explicitly recognized. This includes for example, recognition of the human resources necessary to maintain partnerships, development of the particular skill sets (e.g., negotiation) and early involvement of the appropriate partners in the community.

4. Role of Industry

The role of industry was quite limited in all of the sites included in this evaluation. Yet, involvement of local business would present opportunities for leveraging of contributions and development of employment opportunities for clients. Dedicated positions for job developers were not consistent across the sites. It might be useful to harmonize the job development efforts of resource centres with those of other organizations that are also approaching employers to establish links for future client employment (e.g., local schools and colleges looking for co-op placements).

5. Data Collection

As indicated in the description of the methodological approach for this evaluation, the conduct of this study was hampered to some extent by lack of access and availability of program and participant-level data. The formative evaluation of jobLink noted that there were significant vagaries in the data collected by various jobLink sites (e.g., caseloads, financial information). This presents barriers in examining outcome measures across sites (e.g., cost per client served). Follow-up procedures should also receive increased attention in the planning of employment services and sufficient resources allocated to this activity. Finally, the current evaluation encountered difficulties in assembling a satisfactory sampling frame for the survey of jobLink participants due to confidentiality concerns on the part of the sites. In future initiatives of this nature, it would be useful to secure permission for release of information from clients at the time of the intervention to permit evaluation research in the future.

Appendix A: jobLink Ontario Program Description

In June 1993, the government of Ontario's plan to reform the social assistance system from one of passive income maintenance to an active system more closely linked to the labour market was outlined in a paper entitled *Turning Point: New Support Programs for People with Low Incomes*. A year later, jobLink Ontario was formally announced by the Minister of Community and Social Services (MCSS). Designed to reflect the Government of Ontario's new policy regarding the social assistance system, as well as its broader strategy for economic renewal, the purpose of jobLink Ontario was to help prepare social assistance recipients (SARs) to compete in today's labour market. By helping recipients to become self-sufficient, thereby breaking their dependency on the system, they would be able to contribute to Ontario's economic renewal.

The goal of jobLink Ontario, as indicated in *Local Implementation Planning*, was to involve various levels of government and non-government organizations working together to provide social assistance recipients with a single integrated system of services that will assist them in entering the labour market. Such services would include:

- more opportunities for education and training;
- better access to information on job opportunities and the labour market;
- regulatory changes, service improvements and education and training for those wishing to be self-employed;
- funding for community projects that are innovative and create/lead to jobs; and
- a co-ordinate set of community services.

To guide the establishment and implementation activities of jobLink Ontario, seven guiding principles were developed.[13]

1. To help SARs become more oriented toward an active labour market system with strong links to training and jobs.

2. To focus on jobs as the outcome of training.

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13 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada. *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

3. To actively encourage voluntary participation.

4. To continue meeting the special needs of people with disabilities as well as those with multiple employment barriers by building on existing expertise.

5. To increase equity and reduce the stigma faced by SARs by moving towards a more generic set of services that would be easier for SARs to access.

6. To encourage communities to collaborate in the development of innovative approaches to service delivery.

7. To promote the self-sufficiency and independence of consumers through services that:

   - are based on individual need;
   - are delivered in the least intrusive manner;
   - provide a range of opportunities that are both self-directed and staff-supported; and
   - are sensitive to needs of people with disabilities, people from various racial and ethno-cultural groups, and other identified groups.

In addition to the guiding principles, formal objectives were also developed: one for individuals participating in the program and one for system managers/funders and service providers. These objectives were as follow:

- **Individuals:**
  - — to improve access to all employment and training programs;
  - — to improve employment skills;
  - — to increase level of earnings; and
  - — to secure and sustain employment.
- **System managers/funders and service providers:**
  - — to improve consumer access to employment-related information;
  - — to provide a set of core services that meet province-wide service quality standards;
  - — to organize/co-ordinate services to improve capacity and efficiency, and eliminate duplication;

— to become more responsive to needs by having consumers more involved in planning, developing, managing and monitoring the jobLink Ontario system; and

— to create stronger links between social assistance, employment/education/ training programs and the labour market.

There were seven major components of jobLink Ontario through which social assistance recipients received services:

- Resource Centres;
- Making the Transition from the Existing System;
- Ontario Training and Adjustment Board Programs and Services;
- jobLink Ontario Innovations Fund;
- Employer-based training programs;
- jobLink Ontario for First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples; and
- HRDC Programs and Services.

Resource Centres

The component of interest for this study involves resource centres. Resource centres were set up in local communities to provide SARs with information regarding employment, training and local supports available to them.[14] In co-ordinating the programs and services delivered by the federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as community organizations, the resource centres acted as a single access point for SARs. Information could be accessed either directly by the individual or with assistance from staff. The services to be provided to participants included individual employability assessments and employment planning, education and training programs (e.g., jobsOntario Training), access to computers and computer-based information, supports (e.g., child care, counselling) and staff to provide assistance in using the resource inventory or self-help tools. In providing these services, resource centres were expected to build on and co-ordinate with existing programs and services, but not to duplicate them.

Partnerships

The operation of the resource centres involved partnerships between the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), the federal government (i.e., Human Resources Development Canada — HRDC) and an Accountability Centre. Funding in 1994-95 for the initial sites was jointly shared by the MCSS and the federal government under a Co-operation Agreement signed between the two parties in early 1995.[15] Funding of resource centres remained a responsibility of the MCSS and the federal government. In addition to providing funding, the federal government, through HRDC, also provided technical tools

14 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

15 *Canada/Ontario Co-operation Agreement Concerning jobLink Ontario.*

and LAN support. The actual day-to-day operation of the centres was the responsibility of the Accountability Centre. At a minimum, the Accountability Centre was responsible for delivering the core resource centre services (e.g., resource inventory, self-help tools) and referral or brokerage (i.e., identifying where the client can access services and supports such as training). Accountability Centres were also required to participate in evaluation efforts and to support the introduction of common technology.[16] Organizations interested in taking on the responsibilities of the Accountability Centres were required to submit a proposal that would be reviewed by both the provincial and federal governments and assessed based on specific criteria.

In addition to these partners, guidelines were also provided for the development of Community Advisory Committees.[17] The purpose of the guidelines, which were developed by MCSS, was to ensure that both the structure and responsibility of these committees would be consistent across the province. The purpose of these committees was to provide the structure necessary to encourage community collaboration in the development of innovative approaches to service delivery and to ensure consumers were more involved in the planning, implementing and monitoring of the jobLink service system. These committees were to be comprised of service providers, consumers and other key stakeholders or community partners. The key areas of responsibility of the committees were: community information/consultation/ linkages; service planning, monitoring and evaluation; and advice/recommendations on program design and policy development.

Implementation

Initial sites for the resource centres were identified through a local jobLink Ontario planning process, as detailed in *Local Implementation Planning*. Through this community process, a plan for implementing a local jobLink system was to be developed and then submitted to a central approval process. Of importance to this community planning process was the involvement of consumers, program/service providers, planning groups, educators/trainers, private sector employers and organized labour. In Windsor, for example, some of the organizations invited to participate in the process included:[18]

- Futures/Youth Employment;
- Women's Enterprise Skills Training;
- Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre;
- Association of the Physically Handicapped;
- Goodwill Industries;
- Windsor Board of Education;
- United Way; and
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

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16 Ministry of Community and Social Services, *Materials to Support jobLink Resource Centre Service Contracts*, 1995.

17 Ministry of Community and Social Services, *Community Advisory Committees: Guidelines for jobLink Sites*, 1995.

18 Windsor, *Resource Centre Services Funding Proposal*, November 1994.

In addition to community organizations, it was considered essential for the MCSS, HRDC, OTAB and municipalities to be part of the core planning committee.

In the proposals developed by the communities, a number of key areas had to be addressed: the planning process; existing conditions (including a profile of the community, labour market and the consumer, and the identification of existing services); suggested improvements to existing services; and an implementation and monitoring plan for the providing of services, programs and supports that would meet the objectives of jobLink Ontario.[19] As it was the purpose of jobLink Ontario to augment existing services and not to duplicate them, the identification of existing programs and services and the highlighting of gaps in these services was an important component of the community proposals. In terms of the Windsor and Sudbury[20] proposals, plans for evaluation were also noted. As the designation of the first implementation sites was scheduled for the Fall of 1994, implementation plans had to be submitted by November 1994.

The initial sites for the resource centres included: Metropolitan Toronto; City of Windsor; City of Cornwall; City of Kingston and Kingston Township; Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton; Regional Municipality of Waterloo; Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth; Bruce County; Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin; City of Sault Ste. Marie and District of Algoma. Start-up of the resource centres in these sites was scheduled for January 1995.[21]

The Changing Scene

Political Changes

Shortly after the start-up of the initial resource centres, the provincial election in Ontario changed the provincial context in which the resource centres had been created. With the change in government in June 1995, jobLink Ontario was terminated. While the resource centres were to stay, this change in provincial context caused uncertainty regarding the future of the resource centres and, consequently, affected their development in the first year of operations.[22] For example, in the original plans for the resource centre in Sudbury Central, a local advisory committee was to be established. Findings from a recent evaluation of this resource centre indicate that this has not happened. The primary reason given by key informants who participated in this study for the committee not being established was the uncertainty that followed the June 1995 provincial election. According to respondents, partners did not want to set up a permanent committee until they knew what was going to happen to the jobLink initiative. While the evaluation of the

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19 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

20 Sudbury, *jobLink Resource Centre Plan*, December 1994.

21 Ontario Community and Social Services and Human Resources Development Canada, *jobLink Ontario: Local Implementation Planning*, 1994.

22 Human Resources Development Canada, *Final Report on the Process Evaluation of the Windsor and Sudbury Resource Centres*, September 1996.

Sudbury/Windsor resource centres does not provide an explanation, of note is that the resource centre in Windsor also did not establish an advisory committee as initially planned.

Another impact of the termination of jobLink Ontario was that it removed any centralized co-ordination in the development of the resource centres. Consequently, operations and programming were developed to reflect local priorities. For example, the management committee of the Windsor Resource Centre, which is comprised of representatives of the three partners (City of Windsor, MCSS and HRDC), does not meet regularly.[23] The City of Windsor, in fact, manages the Centre, almost solely, with very little input at the strategic level from the two other partners beyond technical and financial support.

Uncertainty regarding funding sources and budget cuts has also hindered implementation and the extent to which services are provided.[24] Uncertainty regarding funding sources and amounts, for example, was cited as a major barrier to the co-location of community partners in the Windsor Resource Centre. Downsizing at HRDC has also resulted in the number of HRDC counsellors at the Windsor Resource Centre being reduced. Finally, budget restrictions have been cited as the reason for some programs not being available at all sites (e.g., computerized assessment programs at the Chapleau site).

Ontario Works

The introduction of Ontario Works in 1996 resulted in another shift in the provincial context for resource centres, again impacting on their implementation. The recent evaluation of the Windsor Resource Centre commented on the uncertainty of organizations regarding their role in serving the unemployed population due to the introduction of Ontario Works.[25] Not wanting to risk their chances of future funding, they were hesitant to engage in activities associated with the resource centre. Until Ontario Works becomes more clearly defined, including its implementation process, the hesitancy on the part of organizations can be expected to persist.

The purpose of Ontario Works is similar to that of jobLink Ontario in that it aims to break the dependency of social assistance recipients on the system and move them into the labour force.[26] It is, however, a much more aggressive approach in that SARs[27] are required to actively participate in a plan that will assist them in finding permanent employment by improving their skills and/or experience. Failure of SARs to comply with this requirement will result in the withdrawal of their social assistance benefits for a minimum of three months. The exception to this sanction is SARs with families who will have their benefits reduced as opposed to cancelled.

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23 Ibid.

24 Human Resources Development Canada, *Final Report on the Process Evaluation of the Windsor and Sudbury Resource Centres*, September 1996.

25 Ibid.

26 Ministry of Community and Social Services, *A Summary of the Ontario Works Program*, August 1996.

27 Persons with disabilities, seniors, single parents and those who are ill or have other care responsibilities will be exempt.

There are three primary components of Ontario Works: community placements; employment supports; and employment placements. Community placements involves the participation of SARs in unpaid community service directed by either communities or public or non-profit organizations. Employment supports involves those activities that will prepare SARs for finding employment. These activities include: job banks, job clubs and job referrals. Employment placements involves assisting SARs to find and maintain employment. In terms of the resource centres, there is a role for them to play in the employment supports component. Their exact role at the time this evaluation was completed, however, was unclear. The change in legislation means that General Welfare Assistance (GWA) workers will now be responsible for employment assessment and counselling, and training assessment. While the resource centres should prove to be an invaluable resource for GWA workers, the extent to which SARs will access the services of the centres directly is uncertain. This may result in a reduced role for resource centre staff. Also, within the employment supports component, there is a provision for communities, public, non-profit and private sector organizations to be involved in its delivery at the local level. The potential for funding through Ontario Works may prevent some of the employment services organizations from teaming up with resource centres. There is the potential that this may result in services between these organizations and the resource centres being duplicated or, perhaps, the redundancy of the resource centres.

Appendix B: Ottawa Resource Centre Site Description

A. Regional Profile

The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC) encompasses 11 municipalities. The population has been increasing steadily and rose to 678,147 in 1991. This represents a 12% increase from the previous census in 1986. The largest growth in the RMOC during this period was in the east (the population of Cumberland increased 50%) and the west (the population in Kanata increased 36%).

The RMOC differs from the rest of Ontario in a number of ways. The most striking difference is the strong public sector presence. As Ottawa is the national capital, there are three levels of government, which maintain their seats of power in the region: municipal, regional and federal governments. Changes in the public sector, such as federal cutbacks, have had a marked influence on the local labour market.

There are also notable linguistic and cultural differences between the RMOC and the rest of Ontario. Approximately one-fifth of the RMOC's working population is francophone; in 1991, 19% of the population identified their mother tongue as French. As well, a small but growing proportion of the population identified a language other than French or English as their mother tongue (13%, compared with 10% with 1986).

There are also differences with respect to education levels. The labour force in Ottawa-Carleton has traditionally been more highly educated than in other parts of the province. According to the 1991 Census, more than one-quarter of workers in the RMOC (27%) had a university degree compared with 16% for Ontario. Participation rates, however, do not differ significantly. Sixty-seven percent of the working-age population (i.e., aged 15 years and over) in Ottawa-Carleton actively participated in the labour force, compared with 66% for the province of Ontario in 1997. While the unemployment rate in the region increased fairly steadily during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has remained fairly stable over the past four years (8%), and was still lower than the rest of the province in 1997.

B. Description

Development

When Ottawa-Carleton was selected as one of the 11 sites for the implementation of the jobLink Resource Centre Services early in the fall of 1994, an Interim Advisory Committee was assembled. Members of this committee were selected through a series of consultative sessions and represented the following sectors: service consumers; service providers; educators and trainers; organized labour; social action groups; ethnic and

visible minorities; and employers. This committee prepared the funding proposal for the jobLink resource centres, which was subsequently approved by HRDC and MCSS.

One of the recommendations of the funding proposal called for the creation of a jobLink Community Planning and Review Committee, which would assist in the implementation and ongoing operation of the resource centres. The committee was to include both governmental and non-governmental members. Non-governmental representatives included sectoral representatives and individuals who were current or recent users of social assistance. Composition of the committee was also to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the community. The intent was to establish links and ensure ongoing communication in the community. The committee held its first meeting towards the end of May 1995. In September 1995, an existing employment resource centre in the east end of Ottawa became operational as a jobLink resource centre (RC); a few months later, in November, a second jobLink RC opened in the west end of the city at Lincoln Heights Galleria. The sites of the jobLink RCs were selected to be highly visible within the community, ensuring both street access and access via public transit. A third resource centre was established more centrally at 880 Wellington in 1996.

As it was the only site that started from its inception as a jobLink resource centre, the resource centre located in the west end of Ottawa is the focus of this case study. As mentioned earlier, a resource centre had existed in the east prior to jobLink; it was relocated to improve visibility and accessibility and its services were modified to conform to the jobLink proposal. The third resource centre, although it offered services similar to the jobLink resource centres, was never funded under jobLink.

The jobLink delivery model represented a distinct shift in focus from traditional one-on-one counselling towards a self-assisted delivery model, which provided only short term individual counselling. The resource centres were intended to provide a co-ordinated approach to service delivery for recipients of social assistance. Co-ordination would strengthen linkages in the community, which would, in turn, improve communication and facilitate referrals from jobLink staff to other community organizations and vice versa. The service objectives of the Ottawa jobLink resource centres were as follows:

- Provide a highly visible entry point for employment-related services for social assistance recipients (SARs).
- Provide a place where people on social assistance can be supported in their efforts to:
  - obtain and sustain employment;
  - gain skills that increase their self-sufficiency and employability;
  - access educational and training programs;
  - increase their level of earnings to improve their financial independence; and

— obtain information on the labour market, employment opportunities, training and other employment related supports.

- Ensure equal access for all social assistance recipients who are ready to seek employment.
- Market services and clients to employers.
- Improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of service delivery for social assistance recipients by:
  - — supporting and receiving advice from a jobLink Community Planning and Review Committee;
  - — ensuring a meaningful role for consumers;
  - — developing strong linkages with community partners;
  - — implementing evaluation systems; and
  - — amending the programs and services offered through the jobLink Ontario Resource Centre in response to the information provided by the Advisory Committee and available through regular service monitoring.

Early on in the development of the resource centres, partnerships were viewed as an integral component of co-ordinated service delivery. They would be created within the community to ensure the flow of information regarding available programs and services. Partnerships were viewed as necessary to ensure that the RMOC did not duplicate existing services in the community, and to enable the provision of more in-depth, one-on-one counselling for clients with special needs through a system of referrals. The development of partnerships would, therefore, not only result in improved service for clients but would also serve to reduce or eliminate overlap among service providers.

From the establishment of the Interim Advisory Committee during the initial planning stages to the creation of the Community Planning and Review Committee during implementation, working in partnership with community representatives has, in fact, been a key feature of the Ottawa jobLink resource centres. Outreach to the community was identified as a priority during consultations with community representatives and subsequently resulted in the creation of four community liaison worker positions. The intent was to develop linkages with the francophone and the ethnic and visible minority communities, as well as to develop linkages with disability groups and supported employment programs. Liaison workers served a number of functions, such as to:

- outreach and liaise with target communities to inform them of the employment support and services available through jobLink resource centres;

- sensitize resource centre staff to ensure programs and services were responsive and appropriate to clients from the identified target populations;

- act as a resource to the jobLink centres by providing input that might change, modify or improve the services and programs to better meet the needs of all clients; and

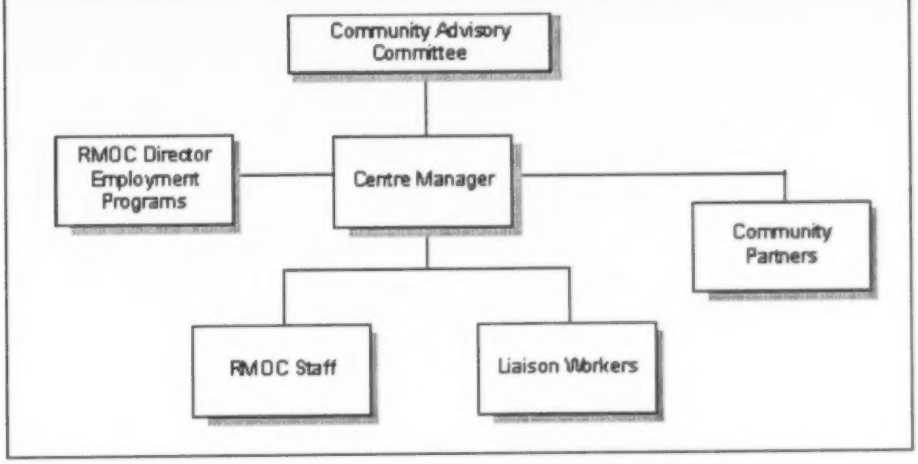
- identify and document target-group specific employment issues.

Organizational Structure

The jobLink RC at Lincoln Heights has a full-time centre manager and maintains eight full-time employment counsellors, one full-time job developer, one part-time technical support staff and three full-time administrative staff. Until August 1997, there were also four liaison workers who divided their time among the city's three resource centres. The eight full-time counsellors provide a full range of employment services; however, they also specialize to some degree. For example, one counsellor might maintain contacts with employment organizations, another might focus on self-help activities, while another might develop expertise in designing workshops. The RC's job developer is part of a job development team within the RMOC's Employment Programs Division and acts as a liaison between the job development team and the RC. The job developer provides employment services to employers, for example, screening applicants and forwarding appropriate résumés for the employers' consideration. The job developer may also spend time with clients in preparation for their interviews. The part-time technical support staff is essentially one full-time person, shared equally among the three resource centres and provides technical computer support. At the outset, there were also two HRDC staff situated at the resource centre, working with RC staff; this arrangement was terminated when HRDC discontinued funding jobLink.

The centre is premised on a team approach. All resource centre staff report directly to a centre manager. Staff meetings with the centre manager are held on a regular (weekly) basis, to discuss, for example, which workshops will be offered in a given month and who will present them. Meetings with staff from all three centres are held approximately four times per year. In addition to regular staff meetings, the Director of Employment Programs (RMOC) and the three centre managers also meet regularly, roughly every two weeks.

EXHIBIT B1.1
Organizational Structure



While one of the strengths of the delivery system is that it is a co-ordinated approach among the three resource centres, each centre has a measure of control over the services it provides, and so is able to tailor its services to meet the specific needs of its clientele. For example, one centre might run a specific course only because the demand at that centre supports it. It will, however, be advertized at the other centres and clients from other centres may also attend.

Client Programs and Services

Although the RC was designed to focus primarily on self-assisted services, short term one-on-one counselling is available. Group counselling is also provided in the form of workshops, which cover various topics such as job search, interview techniques and résumé preparation. Basic computer training, addressing the fundamentals of word processing, is provided on an ongoing basis (weekly) to raise clients' skills to a functional level. Staff-assisted services typically include employment counselling, assessments and referrals (e.g., referrals within the jobLink RC as well as to other agencies such as the Women's Career Counselling). Maintaining partnerships and contacts with other organizations is also important, particularly with respect to referring clients with needs beyond the mandate of the jobLink RC.

Employment counsellors are also required to spend a portion of their time "on call." There are typically two counsellors situated out in the resource area at all times, available to answer any type of question to clients using the self-assisted services (e.g., providing help with the computers, providing advice on a cover letter or résumés). A small childcare area, monitored by staff periodically, is also available for clients with children. The self-assisted services include the following:

- HRDC job bank kiosks;
- a job board;
- local newspapers;
- Internet access;
- telephone privileges for local calls;
- directories;
- facsimile/photocopy/printing services;
- access to computers and word processing software; and
- information regarding community organizations and programs.

Case Management

Under jobLink, service delivery moved away from a one-on-one case management type of approach to a more self-assisted delivery approach. This has meant that employment counsellors do not maintain an ongoing relationship with a single client; rather several counsellors may see the same client. If a client has no need of individual counselling or does not require help with any of the self-assisted resources, employment counsellors may have no contact at all, beyond an initial orientation meeting, with a particular client.

The only criterion employed to screen clients is that they be receiving social assistance. Clients are generally referred to the RC by their caseworker or from other community organizations. A fair proportion of RC clientele, however, approaches the RC without a referral (i.e., roughly one-third of clients). Although no one on social assistance would be denied access to the resource centre, the RC has a focus on job-ready clients who are able to utilize self-assisted services, and so would not be appropriate for all social assistance recipients.

Due to the high visibility of the RC store front, RC staff often receive queries about the centre from individuals not on social assistance. In the interest of maintaining a good relationship with the local community, a "one-time-only" day pass is issued to individuals who do not fulfil the screening criterion, but who have expressed an interest in accessing RC facilities.

Management and Accountability

While objectives and goals for the RC were initially set by the Community Planning and Review Committee, the Director of Employment Programs oversees the activities of the RC, whereas the RC manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations. The RC manager also has responsibility for authorising all expenditures. All expenses are submitted to the RMOC finance department and recorded; monthly reports are generated and distributed to both the Director of Employment Programs and the RC manager to indicate the status of the RC budget.

While information was available regarding client participation in workshops and individual counselling, there was initially no tracking of the use of self-assisted services and little evaluation of outcomes beyond anecdotal evidence. Although aggregate numbers with respect to traffic flow have been captured (i.e., how many clients have

visited the resource centre), there was no method available to track how often a specific client used the resource centre. With the introduction of Ontario Works, clients have been issued a personal identification card, which can be read electronically each time they enter the resource centre. This method is also able to track electronically the activities and services utilized by RC members. According to managers at the RC, the next step is to link the RC clients' data to the departmental central database to facilitate the measurement of the outcomes and effectiveness of the services provided.

Client needs are identified and feedback is solicited via a number of methods. Client needs are initially assessed during an orientation session. These needs are noted and any trends are subsequently communicated during staff meetings. Feedback regarding workshops is collected via assessment forms, which are provided to all workshop participants. Clients also have an opportunity to provide general comments by filling out resource centre evaluation forms, which, although not compulsory, are anonymous and readily available to all clients. Key informants generally acknowledged that, although it was an objective of the RC, not much had been accomplished in the way of implementing an evaluation system. Key informants were also quick to note, however, that funding for the jobLink RC ceased before evaluation issues could be addressed.

Resources

The RC is funded by two main sources of revenue: municipal and provincial funding. Provincial funding actually derives from two separate programs — a provincial contribution to a municipal employment program and jobLink funds. Funding is also provided by Human Resources Development Canada for the provision of services for HRDC's Employment Assistance Services clients (i.e., clients who have exhausted their Employment Insurance). Exhibit B1.2 presents the approximate budgets for the RC for 1996 and 1997.

EXHIBIT B1.2
Ottawa West RC Budget 1996 and 1997

	Municipal	Provincial	HRDC	Total Budget
1996	$480,000	$610,000	$50,000	$1,140,000
1997	$516,000	$434,000	$40,000	$990,000

RC expenditures include staff salaries and benefits, rent and other operational expenses (e.g., office expenses, printing, and travel for clients). Exhibit B1.3 presents RC expenditures for 1996. In 1996, there were 2,713 new clients and 12,517 visits to the centre. This translates into a cost of $74 per client served.

EXHIBIT B1.3
Ottawa West RC Budget 1996 and 1997

	Salaries	Rent	Operational Expenses	Total Expenditures
1996	$570,000	$140,000	$217,000	$927,000

Partnerships

As noted earlier, partnership has been a key ingredient of the Ottawa jobLink resource centres. Partnerships have been developed on several levels to meet a variety of needs. The establishment of the Community Planning and Review Committee represents a partnership of the diverse players within the Ottawa-Carleton community and has served to raise the profile of the jobLink resource centres, ease the co-ordination of services and improve the flow of information among service providers. The RCs have also gained a better appreciation of the mandates and activities of the various community organizations. The partnerships forged by the liaison workers with community-based organizations have served a similar function with respect to raising the profile of the RC and improving the flow of information.

Another of the perceived outcomes of these partnership activities has been the increased focus on the client. In previous years, organizations that shared the same client group both tended to view the same clients as "their clients." Partnership has eliminated this tendency. One key informant likened it to relinquishing ownership of clients ("when we met together, the issue was no longer whose client is this, rather, how can the needs of this client be served").

It is ironic that one of the anticipated outcomes of partnerships was the elimination of duplication of services; in the recent funding environment, duplication has been less of an issue as opposed to closing the gaps in service delivery. Many partnerships have been sought in order to pool dwindling resources, for example, the sharing of expertise among organizations via the provision of in-kind services. At the resource centre level, several partnerships have been formed with community-based organizations to serve just this purpose. The RC has tried to link with organizations with specialized activities that serve the same client group (e.g., organizations serving people with disabilities, visible minorities, women's organizations, and employment services). For example, one community-based organization currently provides the RC with on-site computer workshops in exchange for employment services workshops for its clients.

Strengths and Challenges

Key informants were united in their belief that the RC has successfully achieved its objectives. There is no doubt that the RC storefront Lincoln Heights provides a highly visible and accessible entry point for employment-related services. The self-assisted services at the RC, such as word processing, fax and printing services, provide clients with the tools to engage in a job search. Additional support in the form of short term counselling and workshops is also available.

Although on a fairly small scale, service and clients are marketed to employers via the activities of a job developer. A few employers who had used the RC to hire staff were interviewed and they indicated that they were very satisfied with the employment services provided by the job developer. It had been extremely useful to employers to have someone screen résumés for them, resulting in savings in both time and money. Employers were also pleased with the quality of the candidates forwarded to them.

It is believed that co-ordination has been achieved through partnerships by improving the communication among community organizations. One of the only weak areas identified by key informants was with respect to evaluation of outcomes. Although the self-assisted and staff-assisted services can be evaluated through client feedback, outcomes are difficult to evaluate unless clients are tracked beyond their use of the RC. This will be remedied, however, with the new electronic tracking system.

With respect to equal access for all social assistance recipients, it is important to realize that the RC is designed to assist job-ready clients, and that there is a portion of those on assistance who would not benefit from the RC. These clients may feel ready to seek employment; however, they may not actually be ready to enter the job market in terms of skills. The issue essentially comes down to funding. Some key informants indicated that they would like to be able to provide more in-depth assistance to those who require it, however, it is extremely labour intensive and costly.

According to key informants and focus group participants, key strengths and factors of the success of the RC include the following:

- ***Successful partnerships.*** Many key informants believe that the RC would not have been as successful without the steps taken to create linkages within the community. Engaging in consultation through the Community Planning and Review Committee and liaison workers, identifying needs, and taking steps to address these needs have been integral components of developing the RC.

- ***Strong client focus.*** A shift away from "my client"/"your client" to a focus on how clients can best be served has contributed to improved co-operation among community-based organizations and strengthened partnerships.

- ***Highly visible and accessible RC.*** RC staff indicated that they receive numerous inquiries form passers-by and a number of their clients have found out about the RC through word-of-mouth or have walked in without a referral. Focus group participants also identified the storefront design as a strength of the RC. They, however, did express a desire for greater privacy. Centre resources as well as resource centre clients were easily visible from the mall. This was a point of some embarrassment for a few focus group participants; anyone who saw them in the resource centre would know that they were receiving social assistance. At the time interviews for this case study were conducted, the RC was planning a reorganization, which might mitigate this issue of privacy somewhat.

At the time interviews were conducted, the RC was undergoing considerable change: an HRDC Human Resource Centre (HRCC) was scheduled to open next door to the jobLink RC and the implementation of Ontario Works was imminent. The proximity of the HRCC to the jobLink RC has interesting implications given the distinct mandates of these two centres; both offer employment services, yet one serves only Employment Insurance (EI) clients and the other only social assistance recipients. When notified of the decision to locate an HRCC next door, jobLink staff expressed concern regarding the potential for

client confusion and frustration; they believed that it was inevitable that clients would want access to both resource centres and would not understand why it would be denied. To avoid such a situation, discussions have been held and an agreement has been reached regarding accessibility for clients and the sharing of resources and services. Most recently, an agreement has been reached between the resource centre and the HRCC to physically collocate. The joint centre will be operational in fall 1998, and will bring together the services and resources of both organizations to serve the general public (including EI and SA recipients) who are in need of employment supports. It is anticipated that this collocation will reduce the stigma expressed by some clients, as the new centre will not be identified with the social assistance client group specifically.

Notwithstanding the ever-present challenge to obtain funding for the resource centre, the implementation of Ontario Works poses a number of challenges for the RC. One of the main differences under Ontario Works is that participation at the RC will cease to be voluntary. Both key informants and focus group participants expressed concern regarding the impact that increased participation, due to compulsory attendance, would have on services. With the implementation of Ontario Works, however, these initial concerns have not been realized as the majority of RC clients continue to utilize the services and resources voluntarily.

The jobLink RC delivery model represented a movement away from long term one-on-one counselling to more self-assisted services with some staff-assisted services (e.g., short term counselling, group counselling). There is a fear that the implementation of Ontario Works will result in a further reduction of staff-assisted services due to increased participation. Citing delays due to line-ups or breakdowns in equipment, focus group participants believe that jobLink resources are already stretched to their limit; they anticipate that Ontario Works will cause further delays unless more equipment and staff are provided.

The transition from voluntary to compulsory participation also was considered to have implications for security. The open concept of the RC is vastly different from the locked doors and Plexiglas of social assistance offices. Both key informants and focus group participants speculated whether security precautions would be required under compulsory participation. Should this be the case, the friendly atmosphere of the RC would be seriously compromised. These initial concerns have not been borne out. While referrals from welfare workers have certainly increased, client incidents at the resource centre with respect to security have been minimal.

On a final note, both key informants and focus group participants expressed a desire to see the RC evolve and expand its current mandate. Focus group participants tended to concentrate more on the scope of the services provided, whereas key informants focused on the scope of the target client group. While they understood that it is difficult to tailor services to the individual given resource limitations, focus group participants wanted to see staff-assisted services expanded. It was acknowledged that the resource centre was doing an excellent job of providing the tools and some basic skills to conduct a job search. Participants felt, however, that some services needed to be more tailored to the varying

skill levels of the client. This would entail providing services both to clients with intermediate level skills (e.g., a self-employment program) as well as providing services to clients with more specialized needs (e.g., longer term, one-on-one counselling). The mandate of the RC should also be expanded to include all members of the general public, not just social assistance or EI recipients. One of the challenges for the RC, particularly in light of funding cuts, will be to foster the evolution of the jobLink RC into an accessible resource centre for all members of society, regardless of employment or assistance status.